
SCRIPTURE
VINDICATED;

IN ANSWER to a BOOK intituled,
Christianity as old as the Creation.

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PART III.



LONDON:

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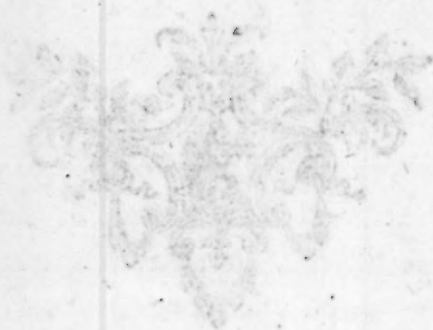
SCRIPTURE

VINDICATED

IN ANSWER TO A BOOK ENTITLED

THE BIBLE AS OLD AS THE CREATION

PART III



LONDON

Printed for John G. Whittier, at the X. Y. Z. Press, No. 10, St. Paul's Church-yard; and sold by Cor-
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and of Cambridge, and elsewhere.

A TABLE OF TEXTS.

2 CHRON. xviii. 18, 19, &c.

I Saw the Lord sitting upon his Throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing on his Right Hand, and on his Left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab King of Israel, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? &c.

Page 1

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 28.

Behold, I will gather thee to thy Fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy Grave in Peace; neither shall thine Eyes see all the Evil that I will bring upon this Place, and upon the Inhabitants of the same.

10

JOB ii. 1.

Again there was a Day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord.

12

PSALM lxxxix. 39,—49.

Thou hast made void the Covenant of thy Servant.—Lord where are thy former Loving Kindnesses, which thou swarest to David in thy Truth?

15

PSALM cix.

20

PSALM

A TABLE of TEXTS.

PSALM CXXXvii. 8, 9.

Ob Daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the Stones.

Page 28

ISA. i. 18.

Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow, &c.

35

ISA. v. 26.

And he will lift up an Ensign to the Nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the End of the Earth: And behold they shall come with Speed swiftly.

41

ISA. xx. 3, 4.

And the Lord said, Like as my Servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three Years for a Sign and Wonder upon Egypt, and upon Ethiopia: So shall the King of Assyria, &c.

45

ISA. lxiii. 17.

Ob Lord, Why hast thou made us to err from thy Ways?

61

JEREM. iv. 10.

Then said I, ah Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this People, and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have Peace; whereas the Sword reacheth unto the Soul.

62

JEREM.

A TABLE of TEXTS.

JEREM. vii. 22, 23.

I spake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them, in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices: But this Thing commanded I them, saying, obey my Voice, &c. Page 67

JEREM. xiii. 4.

Take the Girdle which thou hast got, which is upon thy Loyns, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a Hole of the Rock, &c.

72

JEREM. xv. 18.

O Lord——Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Liar, and as Waters that fail?

82

JEREM. xx. 7.

O Lord, Thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.

83

JEREM. xxvii. 2, 3.

Thus saith the Lord to me, Make thee Bonds and Yokes, and put them upon thy Neck: And send them to the King of Edom, &c.

85

EZEK. iv. 1.

Thou also Son of Man, take thee a Tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the City, even Jerusalem, &c.

89

EZEK.

A TABLE OF TEXTS.

EZEK. xii. 21, 22.

And the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, What is that Proverb that ye have in the Land of Israel, saying, The Days are prolonged, and every Vision faileth?

Page 98

EZEK. xiv. 9.

And if the Prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a Thing, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet, &c.

100

EZEK. xx. 25.

I gave them also Statutes that were not good, and Judgments whereby they should not live.

104

HOSEA i. 2.

And the Lord said to Hosea, Go take unto thee a Wife of Whoredoms, and Children of Whoredoms: For the Land hath committed great Whoredom, departing from the Lord.

110

MICAH vi. 7.

Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?

117

ZECH. iii. 1, 2.

And he shewed me Joshua the High-priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his Right Hand to resist him, &c.

121

2 CHRON. xviii. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

I saw the Lord sitting upon his Throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing on his Right Hand, and on his Left. And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab King of Israel, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one spake, saying after this Manner, and another saying after that Manner. Then there came out a Spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go out, and be a lying Spirit in the Mouth of all his Prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: Go out and do even so. Now therefore behold, the Lord hath put a lying Spirit in the Mouth of these thy Prophets, and the Lord hath spoken Evil against thee.

THIS Chapter contains the History of King *Abab's* being deceived by four Hundred false Prophets, whom he had sent for to sooth and flatter him; as his Way

B was

2 2 CHRONICLES xviii. 18, &c.

was to encourage those that would prophesy *smooth Things*, while he as much malign'd and persecuted all such as had the Fidelity and Courage to tell him an ungrateful Truth*. So since that ungodly Prince hated the *Truth*, and loved a *Lie*, God permitted him to be deceived by *Liars*, and thereby to fall: Which is what the true Prophet *Micaiab* represented beforehand to him in a lively and affecting *Parable*. It is twice recorded in holy Scripture; first, in the xxii^d of the first of *Kings*, and again in the xviiith of the second of *Chronicles*, as is here presented to the Reader. Our Objector, ignorantly imagining that those four Hundred Prophets were *Prophets of the Lord*, like *Elisha*, with whom he joins them, after telling us how *Elisha* deceived *Benhadad*, (that is to say, after telling us his own Dreams^b) he proceeds in his abusive Manner, as follows^c: *But I need not mention single Prophets deceiving, or being deceived, when the Scripture tells us of four Hundred being deceived at once, to the Destruction of a Number of innocent Persons.* Then he sets

* See 1 Kings xxii. 8, 18, 26, 27. 2 Chron. xviii. 7, 25, 26.

^b See the Case of *Elisha* and *Benhadad* fairly represented in Scripture Vindicated, Part II. p. 122, &c.

^c Christianity as old, &c. p. 257.

2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c. 3

down at length the Parable of *Micaiah*, out of the xviiith of *Chronicles*, from Verse 18. to the 21st inclusive.

Now the Sum of the Matter amounts only to this: The Prophets who came to *Abab*, were not *the Lord's* Prophets, but *Abab's* Prophets. They spake at all Adventures, what they presumed would please him, like fawning Parasites, and flattering Sycophants. A Spirit of *Lying* was upon them all, because they were disposed to flatter the King's Humour, found their Gain in it, or durst do no other. This is the short and true Account of the whole Matter: And this is what *Micaiah* sets forth in the *Parable* he then delivered. But because our Objector more than once confounds *false* Prophets with *true*, tho' they agree in nothing but the *Name*; and because the Subject is of some Importance, and may deserve a more minute Discussion, I shall in this Place discourse more at large upon what concerns *false Prophets* in general, and those *four Hundred* in particular, and *Micaiah's Parable* thereto relating.

1. As to *false Prophets* in general, it is no Marvel that there should be such Men. *Prophet* is a Name of Honour, and carries Dignity along with it: And therefore where there are true Prophets, there will be Pretenders also,

4 2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c.

raised up perhaps by their own Vanity or Avarice, or other corrupt Motives. Where there are *Prophets* and *Pastors* to guide and instruct honest and faithful Men, there will be *Anti-prophets*, and *Anti-pastors*, to misguide and seduce those that will be misled by them. As long as there are Persons in the World that love to be soothed and flattered in their Follies, or Vices; while they say to the Seers, see not; and to the Prophets, prophesy not unto us right Things, speak unto us smooth Things, prophesy Deceits^d: I say, as long as the World loves *Flattery*, there will be *Flatterers*; and as long as they love *Deceit*, there will be *Deceivers*: And so while *false* Prophecy, or *false* Doctrine is more acceptable than *true*, there will of course be false *Prophets* or false *Teachers*, as the very Nature of the Thing shows, and as the Experience of all Ages abundantly proves. The true Prophets and Pastors, under the Old Testament, often complained of those false Teachers and Seducers, those loose Casuists, that studied little else but how to contrive palatable Doctrines for all Tastes, or to sew Pillows to all Armholes^e. There were many such Men-

^d Isa. xxx. 10. compare Micah ii. 11.
compare Jerem. v. 31. vi. 14. xiv. 13. xxvii. 9.

^e Ezek. xiii. 18.

2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c. 5

pleasers, both in *Israel* and *Judab*^f, but more particularly in *Israel*. For from the Time that King *Jeroboam* had drawn the ten Tribes into a Revolt, and to prevent their Return, had set up Altars at *Dan* and *Bethel*, in opposition to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, there was Altar erected against Altar, and Priests against Priests, to emulate the Service and Worship of the House of *Judab*. And because *Prophets* also were an Honour to any Church or State, and the *true Prophets* of the Lord were all against the Idolatry of the *Golden Calves*; therefore the Ten Tribes, with their Kings, were under the stronger Temptation to set up and encourage *false Prophets* as Rivals of the true ones^h, thereby to make at least a Show of outvying the other two Tribes with their Kings. *Ahab* was the sixth in the Line of the *Kings of Israel*, and as wicked a King as any had been since the first of the Line: So it is no Wonder, if there should be many false Prophets in his Time, raised up, or however supported and encouraged by him.

2. As to the *four Hundred* ⁱ lying Prophets that deceived *Ahab*, they are called emphati-

^f Jerem. xxiii 15, 16, 21, 25, 30. xxvii 14, 15.

^g 1 Kings xii. 27, 28, 29

^h See Lakemacher Observat. Philolog. Vol. 2. p. 224, &c.

ⁱ 1 Kings xxii, 6. 2 Chron. xviii. 5.

6 2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c.

cally *his* ^h Prophets (not Prophets of the Lord) by *Micaiah*: Tho' they professed themselves to be the Lord's Prophets, prophesying in his Nameⁱ. *Jehoshaphat* soon suspected them, not believing them to be *true* Prophets; and therefore he desired that some other Prophet, a Prophet of the Lord besides those four Hundred, might be called in; sufficiently intimating that he took not them to be such: For if he had, why should he put more Confidence in a single Man, than in four Hundred, or desire any other, after so many?

Some have thought, since the Number so exactly hits, that those false Prophets were the four Hundred *Prophets of the Groves* which were constantly fed at *Jezebel's* Table^l. But it appears not likely that *Ahab* would presume to affront *Jehoshaphat*, in so gross a Manner, by bringing *Jezebel's* Prophets (Prophets probably of *Astarte*, and known Idolaters) before him, and making them speak in the Name of *Jehovah* the true God. Neither, on the other Hand, does it appear at all probable that they were such as had been bred up in the *Schools* of the *Prophets*, under *Elijah*, or any other true Prophet

^h 1 Kings xxii. 22, 23. 2 Chron. xviii. 21, 22.

ⁱ 1 Kings xxii. 6, 11, 12, 24. 2 Chron. xviii. 10, 11, 23.

^l 1 Kings xxii. 7. 2 Chron. xviii. 6.

¹ 1 Kings xviii. 19.

2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c. 7

of God. For, besides that one may reasonably suppose such to have been better Men, *Jezebel*, but a little before, had made so great slaughter of them^m, that there could hardly be any such Number as four Hundred leftⁿ; tho' some indeed might have been hid at that Time, which *Elijah* knew not of°. It remains therefore, that they were, very probably, *Ahab's* own Prophets, such as he had set up by Rewards and Promises, and who accordingly knew how to suit his Humour, and to flatter his Vanity, all agreeing to a Man in the same fawning Compliances, and the same treacherous Counsels, which pleased and tickled for the present, but proved fatal in the End.

3. *Micaiah* however, like an honest Man, and a faithful Counsellor (tho' he could not be heard) discovered the whole Secret, that those four Hundred pretended Prophets were all Deceivers; and all actuated with the same Spirit of *Lying*. Only, instead of bluntly telling the King they were all *Liars*, he takes up his *Parable*, (as Prophets were used to do) declaring what he had seen in prophetick *Vision*; which was the Way that God had made choice of for the opening the whole Matter to him. *Micaiah* himself, in the same Chapter, says, (ver. 16.)

^m 1 Kings xviii. 4, 13.

ⁿ See *ibid.* xviii. 4, 13.

^o See *ibid.* xix. 10, 14.

8 2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c.

I saw all Israel scattered upon the Mountains, as Sheep having no Shepherd, and the Lord said, &c. which can be understood only of what he saw in prophetick Vision, pre-signifying the real Fact that should follow after; for the Thing that he then saw, was not yet come to pass. *Micaiah* therefore saw what he there relates, just as St. *Peter* saw Heaven open'd, and a certain Vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great Sheet, p &c. Not that any thing of what St. *Peter* saw was real, excepting that such Ideas, or such Appearances, were really wrought, or formed upon his Mind, as he lay in a Trance. The like Representation was made to *Micaiah* in a Vision, signifying what was doing in the Matter of *Ahab*, and what the Event would be. The Moral, or Meaning of all was, that as *Ahab* loved to be cajoled and flattered, so God had permitted those four Hundred Men, pretending to be Prophets, to abuse and impose upon him; which in Conclusion would prove fatal to him. After *Micaiah* had thus reported his Vision at full Length, he then briefly explained and applied it to *Ahab*: Now therefore the Lord hath put a lying Spirit in the Mouth of all these thy Prophets. It is frequent in holy Scripture, to call

p Acts x. 11, 12.

that

2 *CHRONICLES* xviii. 18, &c. 9

that the *Lord's Doing*, which he only *permits* to be done, because he has the supreme Direction of all Things, and he governs the Event. Wicked Devices proceed from wicked Men: But that they prevail and take Effect, is owing to the Hand of God directing and ordering where they shall light, and what shall be the Issue of them. As to the Text we are now upon, the very Words of the Original will bear to be translated, *The Lord hath permitted (or suffered) a lying Spirit in the Mouth, &c.* Accordingly our Translators in other Places, often render the Verb נתן *nathan*, by *suffer*, or *let*^r, in the Sense of *permitting*. And it may be observed also of the Words of God to the Lying Spirit, as represented in the Parable, *Go out and do even so*, they are to be understood, not in the *commanding*, but *permissive* Sense; for so is the *imperative* more than once made use of, in other Places of Scripture^s. Therefore there is no Room left for charging God as Author of any Deception brought upon *Ahab* by the Sins of Men.

^q Thus Le Clerc renders: Jehova passus est esse Spiritum mendacii in ore, &c. 1 Reg. xxii. 23. 1 Ephemerid. xviii. 22.

^r Gen. xx. 6. Exod. xii. 23. Psalm xvi. 10. 2 Chron. xvi. 1.

^s 2 Sam. xviii. 23. 2 Kings ii. 17. Matt. viii. 32 Joh. xiii. 27. See Glassius, Lib. iii. Tract. 2. Can. xliii. p. 871. Guarin Grammat. Hebr. Tom. 1. p. 542.

10 2 CHRONICLES xxxiv. 28.

4. As to what the Objector further intimates, of the *Destruction of a Number of innocent Persons*, meaning, I presume, those Persons who fell with *Abab* in Battle: He seems to have thrown it in only to fill up his Period. For how can he know how *innocent* those Persons were? Besides, how can he account for the Fall of Thousands, or of Millions, that have died in the Field of Battle, thro' the Folly and Rashness of their Commanders? But the Objector frequently overshoots his Mark, arguing directly for *Atheism*, rather than for *Deism*; and I suppose without knowing that he does it.

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 28.

Behold, I will gather thee to thy Fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy Grave in Peace; neither shall thine Eyes see all the Evil that I will bring upon this Place, and upon the Inhabitants of the same. They are the Words of God by the Prophetess *Huldah*, to good King *Josiah*, recorded also in the second Book of *Kings*^t. The Objector's Cavil against this Scripture, is as follows^v: *The Prophetess Hilda assures good King Josiah from the Lord, that he should be gathered to his Grave*

^t 2 Kings xxii. 20.

^v Christianity as old, &c. p. 257.

in Peace; and yet soon after he received a mortal Wound, of which he died. This Gentleman here attending only to the Sound of Words, wonders, I suppose, how a Man can be said to come to his Grave *in Peace*, when he dies *in Battle*. But the Phrase *in Peace*, is a Phrase of some Latitude, admitting of more Constructions than one. *Josiah* died *in Peace*, during the publick *Tranquillity*, before the *Troubles* of his Nation came on: He lived not to see all the *Evil* which God had determined to bring upon that *Place*, and upon the *Inhabitants* of the same; as the Text interprets it self. He was taken away from the *Evil* to come, was *peaceably* interr'd, and left his Nation in a *peaceable* Condition. So much *Huldah* the Prophetess intended and signified; and so much was actually fulfilled. But I have said more than enough in Answer to a frivolous Objection, which scarce deserved Notice; because the Text, when recited at full Length, sufficiently answers for it self, and there remains no more Room for Cavil, as soon as we read on to the End of the Sentence.

JOB ii. 1. and compare JOB i. 6.

Again there was a Day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the Lord. The Objector remarking upon this Part of Scripture, puts on an Air of Scorn and Ridicule, expressing himself thus ^w: *According to the acknowledged Maxims you have laid down from Divines; we must not take literally the two Conferences mentioned in the first and second of Job, between God and Satan: When Satan, in very good Company with the Sons of God, presented himself before the Lord; who, when Satan would not otherwise be satisfied of Job's Integrity, permitted him to slay Job's Children and Servants, and reduce him to Extremity, to make the Experiment.* Whether the two Conferences mention'd are to be *literally* taken or otherwise, is a Question proper for *Divines* and *Criticks* to discuss, and it has been often and freely canvass'd amongst them ^x. I must own,

^w Christianity as old, &c. p. 253.

^x See particularly (*besides Commentators*) Pfeifferi dub. vexat. cent. 3. loc. 31. p. 259.

Matth. Mulleri Dissertat. in *Thesaur. Philolog.* Tom. 1. p. 55.

Fred. Spanhemii *Histor. Jobi*, c. 1. p. 13, 14.

I incline to go in with those who understand both the Places as containing a kind of allegorical Representation, or Parable, setting forth many useful Truths under lively and beautiful Images. But yet if the *literal* Construction meets with no shrewder Adversaries than our Objector appears to be, nor with any stronger Objections than he has offered against it, it may very well stand for any Thing I can yet perceive. He thinks it not likely that *Satan* should appear in such *very good Company*, as the *Sons of God* are. I grant that such Company is too good for him: But he that can sometimes *transform* himself *into an Angel of Light*^y, may affect also to appear in Company with Angels of Light, and may intrude himself impudently amongst them. If good Angels are *sent forth* to Mankind, in order *to minister for them that shall be Heirs of Salvation*^z, and if *Satan* also *walketh about* amongst Men, *seeking whom he may devour*, it is not impossible, nor improbable, that the latter may sometimes **present himself** in Company with the former, **before the Lord**.

As to the second Difficulty which the Objector urges, that God should permit *Satan* to *slay Job's Children*, &c. only *to satisfy* the wicked Sycophant that *Job* was a Man of *Integri-*

^y 2 Cor. xi. 14.^z Heb. i. 14.^a 1 Pet. v. 8.

ty, it must be owned there would be *Force* in the Objection, if it had but any *Truth* in it. But since the Text affords no sufficient Grounds for the poor Suggestion, and God might have much higher Ends to answer in that Affair, than what the Objector has here invented, the pretended Difficulty is easily got over, and so the *literal* Construction of the Texts may still be the true one; at least till something better than Buffoonery appears against it. Nevertheless, as I before intimated, I prefer the *figurative* Construction in the present Instance, not condemning those that prefer the *literal*, nor commending such as are dogmatical and positive in either. I am of Opinion with those who think that the Structure of the Book of *Job* is of the dramatical^b Kind, relating *true History*, but curiously set off in a poetical Dress, embellished with many lively Decorations, such as are not to be interpreted up to the Strictness of the Letter, but serve to convey an excellent Meaning, or Moral, to the discerning Readers. The *prophetick* Style generally

^b Probè distinguendum monemus inter *Historiæ veritatem*, & *Consignationis indolem* atque Structuram; cùm negari nequeat librum omnem Poeticè digestum esse, allocutionibus & responsionibus, Figuris & vario Sermonis ornatu instructum, ita ut *Rei gestæ enarratio* dramatico velut Schemate, & habitu induta Scenico exhibeatur. *Carpzov. Introduct. ad Lib. Bibl. P. ii. p. 35.*

PSALM lxxxix. 39, &c. 15

is full of lofty Thoughts, bold Figures, or Emblems, and abounding with Parables: And Job himself (who perhaps was Author of the main Part of the Book ^c) has been deservedly reckoned by learned Men, in the Number of *Prophets* ^d.

PSALM lxxxix. 39,—49.

Thou hast made void the Covenant of thy Servant. — Lord where are thy former Loving-kindnesses, which thou swarest to David in thy Truth?

The Objector having previously observed that *there are Texts which, if taken literally, represent God, not only as falsifying his Word, but his Oaths*, proceeds to mention those Texts: And the *first* he instances in, is *Numb. xiv. 30, 34.* which has been considered in another Place ^e. The *second*, he now says ^e, is in Psalm lxxxix. in the *first Part of which is largely set forth the Promises of God to David, by Covenant and Oath; and in the other Part, David complains of God's Breach both of his Covenant and Oath;*

^c Carpzov. Introd. ad Lib. Bibl. P. ii. p. 55, 56.

^d See Witfii Miscellan. Vol. i. p. 176.

Carpzov. Introd. ad Lib. Bibl. P. ii. p. 44.

^e Christianity as old, &c. p. 257.

^f Scripture Vindicated, P. ii. p. 28, &c.

and

16 *PSALM* lxxxix. 39, &c.

and in summing up those Breaches, he says, **Thou hast made void, &c.** The Gentleman seems to have read this Psalm in Haste, by his ascribing it to *David*. The internal Characters of the Psalm, were there nothing else, are enough to show that *David* could not be the Composer. I may mention a few Particulars: Verse 40. it is said, **Thou hast broken down all his Hedges: Thou hast brought his strong Holds to Ruin.** If *Jerusalem* had been sacked and plundered, one could scarce have made a more doleful Complaint. But what was there done at all like it in *David's* Time? Then again, Verse 43. **Thou hast turned the Edge of his Sword, and hast not made him to stand in the Battle.** This is plainly to be understood of some great Overthrow in Battle; which never was *David's* Case. It has been remarked of that brave and fortunate Prince, that he fought twenty Battles, and was always victorious. Once, indeed, he fled from *Absalom*, till he could gather his Forces together: But when it came to a pitch'd Battle, *David* prevailed. The only Time that can with any Colour of Probability be imagined for *David's* composing this Psalm, must, I suppose, be the Time of *Absalom's* Rebellion, when *David* was advanced in Years: But then what Sense can we make of Verse 45.

The

PSALM lxxxix. 39, &c. 17

The Days of his Youth hast thou shortened. Besides, who can think that *David* would thus complain of God's *breaking his Covenant*, or any Thing like it, when he very well knew that his own Sins in the Matter of *Uriah* were the sole Occasion of his Sufferings at that Time, and that God was notwithstanding as kind and gracious to him as he could reasonably expect or desire? *David* understood Duty and Decorum better than to expostulate with God in such a Way, without something more of Colour for doing it. There are *five* Psalms ^g of his, composed under his Troubles for *Absalom*: But there is nothing at all in them of like Strain with what has been mention'd of *Psalms* lxxxix. These Things considered, that Psalm most certainly is none of *David's*; nor can any considerate Man pretend so much as any Colour for so judging, except it be upon the old, and now generally exploded Presumption, that all are *David's*.

It is with much greater Show of Probability that Commentators ^h and Criticks have ascribed this Psalm to some Person living long after, under the Times of the *Babylonish* Captivity, in the Days of *Jehoiachim*, or *Jehoiachin*, or *Zedekiah*, when there appeared to be a Kind of to-

^g Psalms iii, vii, xlii, xliii, lv.
Patrick, Wells, Calmet, Le Clerc.

^h Hammond, Pool,

18 *PSALM* lxxxix. 39, &c.

tal Subversion of the Royal Family and Government. But considering that the Title of the Psalm seems to ascribe the Composition of it to *Ethan* the *Ezrabite*, who is celebrated in Scripture for his Wisdomⁱ, and who was one of the three principal Men preferred by *David* as chief Singers over the Choir^k, and endowed with prophetic Gifts^l; he is a very likely Person to have been Author of such a Psalm. As to the Occasion which might induce him to it, there was a very remarkable one, which might happen in his Time, if he lived to an advanced Age. I mean the plundering of the City and Temple by *Shishack* King of *Egypt*, in the fifth Year of *Rehoboam*^m, and in the Year before *Christ* 974. So Mr. *Bedford* places it; who also ascribes this Eighty-ninth Psalm to the same *Ethan*, and as composed upon that Occasionⁿ. The Characters of the Psalm seem to suit very well with that Time, and that calamitous Event; but particularly the mention made of *Rahab* in Verse 10. which is the Name for the lower *Egypt* there, as in some other Places of the Old Testa-

ⁱ 1 Kings iv. 31.

^k 1 Chron. xv. 17, 19.

^l Ibid. xxv. 1,—5. Note, that *Jeduthan* seems to have been the very same Man with *Ethan*; of which, see *Carpzovii* Introd. ad Libr. Bibl. P. ii. p. 104.

^m 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26, 27.

ⁿ 2 Chron. xii. 2, 3, &c.

ⁿ *Bedford's Scripture Chronology*,

p. 612, 613.

PSALM lxxxix. 39, &c. 19

ment°. We must suppose this *Ethan* to have lived to a great Age, it being now above forty-five Years since he was first appointed chief Musician by King *David*. The good old Man, who had seen what a glorious Figure King *David* first, and after him King *Solomon*, had made, and to what a Height of Splendor the *Hebrew* Name had been raised over all the Earth, and knowing also what illustrious Promises God had from Time to Time given to the House of *David*, must needs have been exceedingly surprized and shocked at that sudden Downfal, when the King of *Judah*, and the Princes of *Judah*, were all forced to submit themselves tamely to the King of *Egypt*, and to deliver up their *City* and their beautiful Temple (so lately erected) to the Mercy of the Conqueror. Such an Occasion as that was, might well astonish the pious and devout Psalmist, and might extort from him those patheticall Expostulations which we meet with in the Psalm. It might seem as if God had *made void his Covenant*: A strong Way of expressing the most surprizing, sudden, and prodigious Change of Affairs, from the utmost Height of Grandeur to almost the lowest Ebb of Disgrace. And the Case was the more affecting and sensible, because it was the first Calamity of that

° Psalm lxxxvii. 4. Isa. li. 9. and perhaps Job xxvi. 12.

Kind. But the pious Composer of the Psalm, however overwhelmed with Grief and Trouble, yet forgot not to express his awful Reverence towards God, and his entire Confidence in his Mercies. He never had a Thought (like what the Objector supposes) of charging God foolishly with any *real* Breach of Covenant. He begins his Song with declaring, that he will **make known the Faithfulness of God to all Generations**: And he ends with a very devout Doxology in these grateful Terms: **Blessed be the Lord for evermore; Amen, and Amen.**

PSAL. cix.

The Charge against this whole Psalm is, that *David* here *bestows the bitterest Curses on his Enemies*. And the Accuser says, with his usual Pertness and Petulance, that *the holier Men in the Old Testament are represented, the more cruel they seem to be, as well as more addicted to cursing*^p. He had not the Sense to consider, that *Blessing and Cursing* belong solely to God and God's commissioned Officers: For what Wonder is it if the *holiest* Men pronounced the *Curses* of God upon Sinners, when God generally chuses the *holiest* Persons to represent him, and

^p Christianity as old, &c. p. 264, 265.

to speak or act for him? This Gentleman may find in the Book of *Judges* 9, that the *Angel of the Lord* said, **Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly, &c.** And he may go and tell it among his Friends, that the Angels of God are *much addicted to cursing*. He may add, that they are *cruel* also: For an Angel of the Lord went out, and at once destroyed **an hundred, four-score, and five Thousand** of the *Assyrians*^r. But the Objector should learn to distinguish between cursing with *God's Authority*, and cursing *without it*; between *holy* and *profane* Cursing. *David* being a Prophet, might curse in God's Name, and with divine Warrant. But if *Shimei*, or a better Man, without Commission, should presume to denounce *Curses*, he would thereby prove himself an ungodly Wretch, and a grievous Transgressor. The People of God, the *Hebrews*, might *devote, anathematize, or curse* those whom God had commanded them so to devote, or curse: But had they presumed to go a Step farther than their Commission reached, they had been guilty before God. These general Things premised, let us now come to the particular Case of *Psalms* cix.

The Psalm is undoubtedly *David's*, as the Title imports: And it was penned by Inspiration

^a Judges v. 23.

^r 2 Kings, xix. 35.

of the Holy-Ghost. To both which St. *Peter* gives his Testimony in these Words: **Men and Brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy-Ghost by the Mouth of David spake before concerning Judas**; &c. Then he proceeds to quote Places out of the *Psalms*, and particularly the eighth Verse of this *Psalms*; **Let another take his Office: Or, his Bishoprick let another take**. *Le Clerc* in his Comment upon this Psalm, would persuade us that the Words carry no *Prophecy* in them: Which is directly contradicting St. *Peter's* Words, above cited out of the *Acts*^u, and doing it upon very frivolous and trifling Pretences. But as this is not the first Time that that learned Critick has been bolder than becomes him, and has ^w suggested the same Thing, so I may observe that he has been abundantly corrected for it by able Hands^x, referred to in the Margin. This Psalm therefore, as I before hinted, is prophetic of the Treachery of *Judas*, and

^s Acts i. 16.

^t Ibid. i. 20. ὃ ἐπισκοπῶν αὐτοὺς λάβει

ἕτερος. So also the LXX.

^u Ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν ταύτην, ἣν προεῖπε τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δαβὶδ, περὶ Ἰούδα. Acts i. 16.

^w See Sentimens de quelques Theologiens sur l'Histoire Critique, p. 228.

^x Witsii Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 215, &c. Carpzov. Introduct. ad Libr. Bibl. P. 2. p. 122, 123. conf. Surenhusii conciliat. p. 386. Jenkin's Reasonableness, Vol. 2. p. 338. Eusebius in Psalm. p. 699.

declarative of the divine Vengeance that should fall upon his Head.

Some have pertinently enough observed of the *Imprecations* occurring in the *Psalms*, and other Places of Scripture, that they may be considered as *Prophecies* or *Predictions* of what shall come to pass^y, rather than a formal denouncing of Vengeance, or calling down Curses upon Sinners. The *Hebrew* Words, in such Cases, are as capable commonly of the *future*, as of the *imperative* Mood and Sense^z, and may accordingly be rendered in the predicting Style. The thirteenth Verse, for instance, of this very Psalm, may be rendred thus: **His Posterity will be (or, shall be) cut off, and in the Generation following his Name shall be blotted out.** In other Places also, where the Verb is really *imperative*, we may justly render the Original by the *future*, because the imperative in prophetic Writings is often put for the future, as the best

^y Quando Sancti viri deprecatorio more contra Hostes suos rogant, non *voto malitiæ*, sed *Spiritu Prophetiæ* hoc quod præsciunt futurum prædicunt: Vel etiam contra spirituales nequitias orant, quas incorrigibiles esse sciunt, ut justam a domino recipiant sententiam. *Hieronym.* in Thren. 1. 22.

^z See Hammond's *Preface to the Psalms, and Comment on Psal.* xxxv. 4. Jenkins, Vol. 2. p. 237, 238. Le Cene *Projet d'une Nouvelle Version*, p. 702. Rofs 295.

Criticks in the Language have shewn^a. This Solution appears to be very just, if indeed there be Occasion for it, and therefore I mention it. But I conceive it sufficient to say, as before, that since *Prophets* have *Commission* to denounce the Curses of God, and they do it as God's Instruments or Deputies, in his Name, and by his Spirit, more need not be said; neither is it material whether such Imprecations be taken in the *imperative* or *future* Sense. I like this Account the better, because it will hold universally, which perhaps the other will not. For there are several *Imprecations* in Scripture, which seem not fairly reducible to the Head of *Prophecies*, or *Predictions*. I chuse therefore to rest the Thing entirely upon the *divine Warrant*, as appearing to me the easiest and shortest Rule, and least involved of any. He that has God's Authority and extraordinary Commission to *curse*, may do it, must do it: He that pretends to it otherwise, calls down Curses upon his own Head, as being therein *injurious* towards Man, and *profane* towards God. If therefore our Objector can show that the Psalmist had no extraordinary *Commis-*

^a Glassii Grammat. Sacr. l. iii. Tr. 3. can. 43. p. 869. Noldii Concordant. p. 1013. Guarini Gramm. Hebr. Tom. 1. p. 541, 542. Vitringer in Isa. Vol. 2. p. 845. Lakemacher Observat. Philolog. Vol. 2. p. 71.

sion to imprecate divine Vengeance upon Transgressors, he may then justly find fault: But if *David* was a *Prophet*, and had the *Spirit* of God, then *David's* Imprecations were *divine* Imprecations, and there is no Room left for our Author's Buffoonery on that Head. The judicious Bishop *Wilkins* has a Paragraph ^b very apposite to our Purpose, which I may here insert for Illustration. "Those who used these Imprecations were extraordinary Persons, endowed with the Spirit of discerning, whereby they were enabled to judge of the incurable State of those with whom they conversed. There are some that are *curst Children*, as the Apostle speaks ^c, κατάρας τέκνα, *Filii maledictionis, execrandi homines*; and to such, *Curses* are reserved as their Portion. And therefore no Wonder tho' such as had an extraordinary Spirit of discerning their true State, do use Imprecations against them, which yet can be no Warrant for other Persons to imitate. *As none but the Magistrate may use the Sword for Revenge, because of his publick Station and Calling, whereby he is authorized for it; so none but extraordinary propheticall Men should use these Maledictions.* If others shall presume upon it because of their Example,

^b Wilkins, Serm. xii. p. 375, 376.

^c 2 Pet. ii. 14.

“ they will justly fall under the Rebuke of our
 “ Saviour, ~~We know not what Spirit ye are~~
 “ of^d. The ordinary Rule prescribed for Mens
 “ Practice, is that of *Matt. v. 44. Rom. xii. 14.*
 “ **Bless, I say, and curse not.**” I shall only
 add, by way of Remark upon what this excel-
 lent Writer has said, that I do not think he puts
 the Case exactly right, while he puts it upon
the Spirit of discerning the true State of the
 Persons on whom they imprecate the divine
 Vengeance: For tho’ it be true that the *Pro-*
phets, or *Apostles*, had such a *Spirit of discern-*
ing; yet neither would that sufficiently warrant
 their Imprecations, if they did not *discern* also,
 either by *private* Impulse of the *Spirit*, or *out-*
ward Direction, that it was God’s Will and Or-
 der, that they should so imprecate. When *Eli-*
sha, for instance, *curst* the little Children that
 mocked him^e, he considered not, or had no
 need to consider, any Thing of *the true State*
 of those Children: But the Spirit of the Lord
 came upon him; and he had a *divine Impulse*
 or Direction, to curse in the Name of the Lord.
 The like may be said of several other Scripture-
 instances, which for Brevity sake I omit. When
prophetical or *inspired* Men thus imprecate, by
 divine Direction, or Impulse, there is no more in

^d Luke ix. 55.^e 2 Kings ii. 23, 24.

it than there was in *Moses's* stretching out his Hands, or his Rod, by God's Order, to call down Plagues upon the *Egyptians*. But if any one without such *special* Commission, or *Inspiration*, should attempt to do the like, it would be *brutum fulmen* in respect to *Others*, but highly dangerous to the Person *himself*, as it is sinning against God and Man, with a high Hand.

Before I leave this Article, I may take some brief Notice, by the Way, of the Instance which the Objector pitches upon, to prove that the *bo-lie* Men have been represented, in the Old Testament, the more *cruel* ^f they have appeared to be. It is the Instance of *David's* cruelly treating the *Ammonites*, as our Author pretends. It is sufficient to say, that he is no competent Judge of that Matter, for want of knowing the Case; tho' it is not material whether *David* did right or wrong, since nothing depends upon it. However, since the Accuser does not know how many or how great Reasons there might be, at that Time, for so humbling the proud Nation of the *Ammonites*, nor what Necessity *David* might then lie under, or what Commission he might have to oblige him to act as he did; but since by all Accounts the *Ammonites* were a most in-

^f Christianity as old, &c. p. 264, 265.

^g 2 Sam. xii.

^{31.} 1 Chron. xx. 3.

28 *PSALM* cxxxvii. 8, 9.

sulting and haughty People, and. *David* in his general Character, a very kind and merciful Man; the favourable Presumption most undoubtedly lies on the Side of *David*, and the Blame ought to be thrown rather upon the provoking Insolencies of the *Ammonites*, than upon so good a King. It is rash Censure therefore in the Objector, to fall so rudely upon *David*, before he knows why; and it shows more of a Disposition to *defame* at all Adventures, than to pass a *righteous Judgment* upon Men and Things.

PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9.

O Daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the Stones.

The Objector brings the like Charge against some Parts of this Psalm, as he had before done against *Psal.* cix. He remarks^h, *Tho' the Lord bids the Jews to pray for the Peace of Babylon, whither he had caused them to be carried away Captives, and that in the Peace thereof they should have Peace*ⁱ; yet is it not said in the Psalms, O Daughter of Babylon, &c. and this

^h Christianity as old, &c. p. 264.

ⁱ Jerem. xxix. 7, for

PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9. 2

for no other Reason, but because she desired of her Captives one of the Songs of Zion^k? How-
ever light this drolling Gentleman may make of singing a Song, in the midst of the most afflicting Calamities, I am persuaded that if the Case were his own, he would think such a Request as that was (such an Instance of cruel Mocking and Insult) no slight Addition to the Injuries before sustained. It was no common Affliction which the captive *Jews* at that Time lay under. The Prophet *Isaiab*, long before prophesying of the Downfal of *Babylon*, assigns this Reason for it, as from God, that she had shown no Mercy towards God's People, but had heavily laid her Poke upon the ancient^l. The Prophet *Jeremiah* says, Israel is a scattered Sheep; the Lions have driven him away: First, the King of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon hath broken his Bones^m. But if the Reader would have a more lively Image of the Miseries of the captive *Jews*, let him turn to the doleful *Lamentations* of the same Prophet, and from thence judge what Disposition they could then be in for singing Songs of Joy. It was a barbarous Cruelty to demand it of them in those Circumstan-

^k Psal. cxxxvii. 3.

^l Isa. xl. ii. 6.

^m Jerem. l. 17.

compare Jerem. li. 34, 35. Zech. i. 15.

30 PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9.

ces: Besides, it would have been profaning their sacred Musick and devout Songs, (dedicated to high and holy Uses) to have prostituted them in such a Manner to the Scorn, Laughter, and Derision of Infidels. But the Objector's Account of this Matter is so low and ludicrous, that it will be thought I have honoured it too much in returning a serious Answer to it.

The other Part of his Objection seems to carry more of the Face of an Argument, and to deserve some Attention. He conceives that the *Imprecations* of the Psalm against *Babylon*, do not well comport with God's Directions to his captive People, to *pray for the Peace of Babylon*. But from hence, if he had been used either to compare or to consider rightly, he might have learned to distinguish between the *ordinary Rule of Practice*, and the *extraordinary Commissions given to Prophets*. The Psalmist was a Prophetⁿ, and wrote by the special Direction, or Impulse of the holy Spirit of God; while the common People at *Babylon*, (and Prophets also in their private Capacity) were to follow the ordinary Rule of praying for those very Enemies whose Destruction was coming on, but in God's

ⁿ Probably the Prophet Ezekiel himself, as Mr. Bedford supposes, placing the Date of it in the Year 583. before A. D. Bedford Script. Chronol. p. 710.

PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9. 31

own Time. In the mean Season, the Safety of the *Jewish* Captives depended upon the Safety of *Babylon*, and was wrapp'd up in it; and so it concern'd them both in point of Duty and Interest, to submit peaceably and quietly to their new Masters, and to pray for their Prosperity. Notwithstanding all which, they might justly hope for a Deliverance at the Seventy Years End; and God might instruct his Prophets to declare it before-hand, together with the Manner of it. *Isaiab* had prophesied of the Destruction of *Babylon* above an hundred and fifty Years before, and in Terms not unlike to some Parts of this Psalm: He had said, **Their Children also shall be dashed to Pieces before their Eyes°.** The Psalmist further adds, that the Instrument under God, in punishing *Babylon*, shall be happy, shall be *blest* and *praised* in his Deed, as having done a glorious Work, in executing the divine Justice upon her, and at the same Time rescuing and delivering the People of God. This Prophecy, or Denunciation, was fulfilled by the *Medes* and *Persians* under the Conduct of *Cyrus* the Servant and Chosen of God. And now, what Harm could there be in the holy Psalmist's prefiguring, in pathetick Style, these high and marvellous Things?

° Isa. xlii. 16.

32 PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9.

I had here closed up this Article, when looking into *Le Clerc's* Commentary upon this Psalm, I beheld with some Concern, his very crude or perverse Way of expressing himself on Ver. 8. He says, *Those Things* (those Imprecations he means of the Psalmist) *were proper to those Times, when it was thought lawful to entertain Hatred against private and publick Enemies* P. Under the Gospel, it is not lawful to wish any other to them than you would wish to your self. Is this commenting upon Scripture like a serious Man, or is it not rather playing the Drole with sacred Writ? By *whom* does he suppose it was *thought lawful* to hate an Enemy? By the most excellent Men of the *Jewish* Church, Penmen of holy Scripture, and writing by the *Spirit of God*? A profane Suggestion! Neither *new* Testament nor *old* allows any such *Hatred*: It stands condemned both by the *Law* 9 and the *Gospel*. And how came it to pass that the best Kind of Men among the *Jews* understood not the Maxim of doing to others as they would have done to themselves, which was commanded in their

P Hæc sunt eorum temporum, quibus odio habere inimicos & hostes fas esse putabatur. Sub evangelio fas non est optare iis, nisi quod tibi ipse optaveris. *Cleric.* in Psal. cxxxvii. 8.

Compare Sentimens de quelques Théologiens, &c. p. 229.

9 See Whitby on Matt. v. 49.

Law^r,

PSALM cxxxvii. 8, 9. 33

Law^r, and escaped not the Notice of the wiser Pagans^s? To be short, there is no *Hatred* of an *Enemy* shown, merely in denouncing God's Judgments against them by God's Direction, nor in executing the Sentence of God, by God's Order, upon them: So the whole Turn of the Thought proceeds upon a false Ground.

Besides, how would the Gospel Preachers themselves stand clear, if all *Imprecations* were inconsistent with the loving one's Neighbour as one's self? St. *Paul* denounces Curses, or Imprecations, in more Cases than one^t: But St. *Paul* was a Prophet, and more than a Prophet, and had Commission to do it in the Name of the Lord. And indeed, if it be considered, that God's Design is to set both his *Blessings* and his *Curses* before Men^v, in order to incite them to Good and to deter them from Evil, and that his Wisdom may judge it proper to make use of the Ministry of Men, as his Instruments in doing it; what Offence need it give to any serious and considerate Person, to find that either the *Prophets* of the Old Testament, or the *Apostles* of the New, (the fittest Persons for it) have delivered, by divine Direction, the divine *Maledic-*

^r Levit. xix. 18, 34.

^s See Commentators on Mat. vii. 12.

^t 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Gal. i. 8, 9. 2 Tim. iv. 14.

^v Deut. xi. 26. xxx. 1, 19.

34 *PSALM* cxxxvii. 8, 9.

tions, or *Curses* upon Sinners? It was their Duty to do it, and They therein showed the Perfection both of their Love towards God, and their Charity towards Man.

I have dwelt the longer upon this Point, because it seemed to want some clearing; and because many have been apt either to take Offence, or to run into gross Mistakes, only for want of considering the proper and necessary Distinction, before mentioned, between *holy* and *profane* Cursing, between executing a Command of God, and doing a Thing without Command, only to please our own selves. The first is as laudable and truly pious, as the latter is execrable and altogether profane. **Bless, and curse not^w:** That is the ordinary Rule to go by. And so sacred a Rule it is, that Men are effectually tied up from all *Cursings* of their *own*^x, and have no Power left in that Case, except it be to declare *God's* Curses, and those *general* only, or in the very Words of Scripture. As to any Thing more *special*, God seems to have reserved it to his own *special* Directions, which have ceased long ago, ever since *Prophecies* and *Inspirations* have ceased.

^w Rom. xii. 14.
not cursed? Numb. xxiii. 8.

^x *How shall I curse, whom God hath*

ISA. i. 18.

Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Tho' your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow, &c. The Objector's Reflections upon this Passage, are as follow^y: *Does not God here appeal to their Reason for the Sufficiency of moral Things to wash away their Sins tho' of the deepest Die? And could God and Man reason together, except there were some Notions in common to both, some Foundation for such Reasoning?* As to God's appealing to our Reason and God and Man's reasoning together, the Text it self might be disputed, so far as this Text is concerned: For the Text in the Original says no such Thing. *Le Clerc* translates the Words thus: **Come now and let us be corrected^z: For, the Lord says, if your Sins**

^y Christianity as old, &c. p. 194.

^z Tum agite, nos castigari patiemur; ait enim Jehova: Si fuerint peccata vestra instar coccini, &c.] נִכְחָה nivvachecah, castigemur, διελεγχθῶμεν, arguamur; ut habent LXX Int. non arguite me, ut vulgata, repugnante Grammatica & loci sententia. Verba sunt hæc non Dei, sed Prophetæ Judæos hortantis ut se a Deo castigari patiantur, atque emendentur; ut ostendunt verba sequentia, si fuerint, &c. Itaque vertendum non fuit, disceptemus: Non vocantur enim Judæi a Propheta, ut cum Deo disceptent, quod grave esset delictum; sed ut sibi peccatorum suorum probè consci, non ægrè ferant se a Deo castigari, & castigati emendentur. Cleric. in loc.

be as Scarlet, &c. His Translation appears to be justifiable by the Rules of Grammar and Criticism: And he observes very pertinently, that the *Jews* are not here called by the Prophet to *dispute* with God, which would be irreverent and criminal, but to submit to Chastisement (as conscious of their Sins) and to reform their Manners. However, it is not to be doubted but that God sometimes condescends to *reason* with Men, and permits them to *reason* with him: And there is no need to heap Text upon Text, to prove only what no Body denies, that God would have us *make use of our Reason*. If this Gentleman himself would do so, laying aside *Passion* and *Prejudice*, he might appear both a wiser, and a better Man. But if God invites his People to *reason* with him, he does not therefore encourage them to *cavil* against him, or directly to *blaspheme* him. His Intent is not that they should presume to *prescribe* to his Wisdom, or *dispute* his Authority as to laying any *positive* Commands upon them. He would not suffer them to dispute his Servant *Moses's* Authority, in such a Case, nor that of any of his *Prophets*: Much less would he encourage any direct Affront of that Kind against himself. So let not this Author, under Pretence and Cover of *rea-*

* 1 Kings xiii. 4. 2 Kings vii. 2, 17. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 6.

soning with God, turn an Advocate for *Petulance* or insolent *Defiance*; which is not *Reason*, but *Rashness*, or rather *Madness*.

As to his Inference in favour of *moral Things* (in opposition, I suppose, to *positive Duties*, and the Necessity of *Redemption* by *Christ*) it is very lame and insufficient in both its Views. He does not consider, that *positive Duties* stand upon a *moral Foot*, and are all wrapp'd up, as soon as they become Duties, in what he calls *moral Things*. To obey God in whatsoever he commands, is the first *moral Law*, and the fundamental Principle of all *Morality*. The Reason of Things, and the Relation we bear to God, require, that God should be obeyed in Matters otherwise *indifferent*: And such Obedience is *moral*, and the opposite Disobedience *immoral*. It is *moral Duty* for a *Son* to obey his *Father* in Things *indifferent*, or for a *Subject* to obey his *Prince*; much more for a *Creature* so to obey his *Creator*. *Positives* therefore, while under Precept, cannot be slighted without slighting *Morals* also. In short, *positive Laws*, as soon as enacted, become part of moral Law, and are a Branch of *Morality*; because, as I said, *universal Obedience* to God's Commands, is the first *moral Law* into which all Laws resolve.

As

As the Reason of the Thing it self shows that thus it must be, so the Text of *Isaiah* confirms the same Thing. For what are those *moral Things* which the Prophet there teaches or recommends? One of them is, **Cease to do Evil, learn to do well^b**: Which amounts to being righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord, blameless^c: Which undoubtedly takes in Obedience to all *positive* as well as *moral* Precepts of the Lord Almighty. And what if God rejected with some Disdain, the hypocritical Services of the *Jews* of that Time, their *Sacrifices^d*, their *Attendance* at his *Temple*, or *Court^e*, their *Oblations* and *Incense^f*, their Observation of *New Moons* and *Sabbaths*, their *solemn Assemblies^g*, and even their *Prayers^h*? Those heartless, senseless Services, which had no Godliness, no Sincerity, no true Love of God in them, were not the Services which God required, or took Delight in. God would not accept of vain Compliments, nor be bribed with pretended *Giftsⁱ*, offered only to excuse from Duty, to compound for Sin, and to palliate unjust Deal-

^b Isa. i. 16, 17.^c Luke i. 6.^d Isa. i. 11.^e Ibid. i. 12.^f Ibid. i. 13.^g Ibid. i. 14.^h Ibid.ⁱ See Deut. x. 17. 2 Chron. xix. 7. Ecclesi.

ings. God expected that their *Hearts*, as well as their *Bodies* and *Sacrifices*, should be presented to him: He required *religious* and *devout* Performances, not the outward *Shell* and *Carcase* of Religion. In a Word, he demanded both positive and moral *Duties* strictly so called; not *Hypocrisy*, which is a *Face* only of Duty, or *Form* of Godliness, but a *real* Abomination^k. What then is there in this Place of *Isaiab* tending either to *exclude*, or even to *depreciate* positive Duties? Not one Syllable: Neither indeed is there in the whole Scriptures. Turn them over from one End to the other, and you'll find nothing clear or certain concerning the Distinction between *moral* and *positive*; much less will you find that ever *moral* Duties are extolled in opposition to *positive*, as such: But all we shall find that looks any thing like it, or can be mistaken for it, is, either that *sincere* Obedience is preferred to *superficial*, inward Goodness to outward Modes

^k Si cliens ea munera ultro, vel etiam edicta, ordine suo offerat, & Solemnia Regis observet, non ex *Fide* tamen, nec *Corde puro*, nec *pleno* circa cætera quoque obsequia (*leg.* obsequio) nonne consequens ut Rex ille, vel Dives, exclamet: *Quo mihi multitudinem munerum tuorum? Plenus sum: Et Solennitates & dies festos, & vestra Sabbata odit anima mea.* *Vestra* dicendo, quæ secundum libidinem suam, non secundum Religionem Dei celebrando, sua jam, non Dei fecerant. *Conditionalem* idcirco & *rationalem* demonstravit recusationem eorum quæ administranda præscriperat. *Tertull. adv. Marcion. l. ii. c. 22. p. 393.*

and Forms, to mere external Performances¹; or *intire* Obedience preferred to *partial*; or the *great Lines* of Duty, the first *Stamina* of Religion, the *weighty* Matters of the Law, preferred to the remote, or minuter Branches of Duty, which hang upon the other, and are of no farther Value or Use than as conformable to them, and wrapp'd up in them, and with them.

Having seen how little Colour there is, from this Place of *Isaiah*, for excluding *positive* Duties, I am next to observe, that there is as little Foundation for excluding the *Merits* or *Satisfaction* of *Christ*. The Duties there mentioned are required as *Conditions* without which no Mediation or Satisfaction could avail any Thing: As to the *meritorious* or *efficacious* Cause of Salvation, That stands as before, and is not at all affected with what is there said. The Redemption by *Christ* might notwithstanding be necessary to render all Services (moral, or positive) accepted: And it is indeed either expressly

¹ Nec enim iis, cultum divinitus institutum Prophetæ redarguunt & taxant, sed Populi *Hypocrisin*, & obfirmatam ad Sceleramentem, cui *externum* Sacrificiorum, Festorum, Oblationumque *Opus* prætendebant; præclare de se actum censentes, modo holocausta offerrent, & *externo* ritu sacra obirent, licet *absque Fide*, absque ulla *vita* emendatione, impœnitentes, indurati, sceleribus adhuc immerfi. *Carpzov. Introd. ad Libr. Bibl. P. ii. 60.*

or tacitly included in all Grants of Pardon from God. It is a Truth so plain in many Places of Scripture, and particularly in the Book of *Isaiab*, and alluded to in this very Chapter ^m, that I need not say more of it. But why will our Objector appeal to *Scripture*, for the *Sufficiency of moral Things*, when he admits not the Authority of Scripture? Or why will he here pay any Regard to the Words of the *God of Israel*, whom at other Times he insults and blasphemes?

ISA. v. 26.

And he will lift up an Ensign to the Nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the End of the Earth: And behold, They shall come with Speed swiftly. Our Objector's Quarrel here, is only with the single Word *hiss* ⁿ: And had he made it an Objection against the *Translation* only, and not against *Scripture* it self, he might perhaps have shown some Exactness of Judgment, or Delicacy of Taste. But by over-shooting the Mark, as usual, he has lost the Advantage. He had been talking just before, ^o of *Wine cheering both God and Man*; which has been considered in another Place ^p.

^m Isa. i. 26, 27. See Vitringa's *Comment*.

ⁿ Christianity as old, &c. p. 252

^o Ibid. p. 251.

^p Scripture Vindicated, Part 2. p. 78, 79.

Then he adds as here follows: *And what is yet stranger, such Actions are attributed to him, as can only belong to the lower Rank of Creatures, such as hissing, God being in three Places* [¶] *of the Prophets, said to hiss; and in one Place, to hiss for a Fly that is in the uttermost Part of the River of Egypt, and for the Bee that is in the Land of Assyria.* It is not very strange, that Languages should abound with Figures and Metaphors, or that Prophecies should contain Parables and apt Similitudes. What Man that knows any Thing of Language, or Letters, would expect otherwise? However, considering that the Word *hiss* is apt to carry with it a low Idea, one might wish that our Translators had chosen a less offensive Word which might but tolerably have expressed the Sense. Besides, the Word *hiss* seems not *proper*, as not well answering to the original Word שֵׁרָק. For whether we suppose the Metaphor taken from a *Shepherd's* calling to his Sheep^s, or from a *Bee-keeper's* calling to his Bees^s, *hiss* is not the proper Expression for either. Other Words might be thought on more expressive of

[¶] Isa. v. 26. vii. 18. Zech. x. 8.

[¶] Ibid. vii. 18.

^{*} See Vitringa on Isa. vii. 18. Cleric. in Isa. v. 26.

^{*} See Bochart's Hieroz. Part II. l. iv. c. x. p. 506. Vitringa in Isa. v. 26.

the Metaphor, were it necessary to follow the Figure: But I see no Reason for such scrupulous Exactness. The general Word *call* would fully express the Meaning; and that is sufficient in such Cases. Our older Translations (as *Coverdale's* of 1535. and *Matthews's* of 1537. and the *great Bible* of 1539.) have **call unto them** in this Place, and, I think, very wisely. The *Geneva* Translators of 1560. first brought in **hiss unto them**: And they have been followed by *Parker's Bible*, and by our last Translation, too closely. I commend not the older Translations for having **whistle**, ^v in *Isa.* vii. 18. and **blow for them** in *Zech.* x. 8. The same Word **call** would have served better in all the three Places. And tho' the Metaphor perhaps would be lost, or obscured, yet Decency of Expression without Detriment to the Sense, would be preserved, which should be look'd after, and which is much preferable to a scrupulous Exactness that may give Offence in such Cases. I observe, that the *Hebrew* Word קרא is made use of in the thirteenth Chapter, Verse the third, in the same Sense, and to the same Purpose, as שרק here, and is there literally rendred **call**: And so might this other Word be rendred also without any

^v So Pool also, in his Notes on this Text.

Impropriety. Some indeed have chose *whisper*^w, instead of *hiss*; which is a Word of more Dignity: But it dilutes and diminishes the Sense. A loud or shrill Call seems to be intended in all the three Places; for neither do Shepherds *whisper* to their Sheep, nor Bee-keepers to their Bees. In short then, I know no better *English* Word than *call*, to preserve the Sense, and at the same Time to keep up Dignity of Expression.

The true and full Meaning of the two Places in *Isaiab*, is neither more, nor less than this: That God having sovereign Command over all Nations and People, can convene them together from remote and distant Quarters, to execute his most righteous Judgments. Whenever God gives the Signal, or issues out his Summons, they will advance with all Alacrity, to perform his Will, tho' not knowing that his Hand is in it. The *Fly* and the *Bee* (in *Isa.* vii. 18.) denote the *Egyptian* and *Assyrian* Armies, which should come up with Speed from their respective Quarters, to execute the divine Vengeance upon *Palestine* for their flagrant Iniquities. The former would come swiftly upon them, like Swarms of devouring *Flies*, to infest and annoy them, and to exhaust their Blood and Juices: And the latter should approach as Swarms of angry Bees,

or Wasps, to sting them to Death. Such is the Prophet's Meaning, veiled under elegant Figures; which give new Life and Strength to his Expressions, and render the whole more poignant, and more affecting.

ISA. xx. 3, 4.

And the Lord said, like as my Servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three Years for a Sign and Wonder upon Egypt, and upon Ethiopia: So shall the King of Assyria, &c. The Objector hereupon says^x: *How many Commands did God give his Prophets, which, if taken according to the Letter, seem unworthy of God, as making them act like mad Men, or Idiots?* As for instance, *The Prophet Isaiah walked for three Years together naked for a Sign.* The Objector, to do him Justice, is not singular in finding fault with this Place of the Prophet, nor in his so construing it as if the Prophet went stark naked, and for three whole Years together, if the *literal* Interpretation is to be admitted: And upon that Supposition, he has some Colour for saying, that such a Command *seems unworthy of God, as making the Prophet act like a mad Man, or an Idiot.* But

^x Christianity as old, &c. p. 255.

he too hastily takes for granted that the *literal* Interpretation must necessarily suppose, either that the Prophet went entirely *naked*, or that he did so for so long a Time as *three whole Years*. Interpreters have taken three several Ways of interpreting this and the like Places in the Prophets: Some suppose that what is here told, was *really* and *literally* performed; Others, that it was transacted in *Vision*; Others that it is all no more than a *Parable* dictated by God to the Prophet, and by the Prophet recited to the *Jews*. It will be proper here to examine with some Care, the Strength and Merits of these three several Interpretations, in the Order as I have mentioned them.

I. I shall begin with the first of them, which may be called the *literal* Construction in an emphatical Sense. For tho' all the three Constructions are *literal*, as following the *literal* Signification of the Words, and as opposed to *figurative*, or *metaphorical*; yet the first only can be termed *literal* in a stricter Sense, as opposed to *visional* (if I may so call it) and *parabollical*. For the literal Construction, may be pleaded as follows:

First, It is the most *ancient* Construction, espoused by the primitive Fathers ^y of the Church,

^y Eusebius in Isa. c. xx. p. 438.

Hieron. in Loc.

Cyrill. Alexandr. Tom. ii. p. 300.

and

and never disputed in those early Times. Secondly, The Text it self seems to be plain and exprefs: For it is said, *He* [Isaiah] *did* so, *walking naked and barefoot*^z: And afterwards, *My Servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot*^a. Then, *Thirdly*, The Fact is represented as a *Sign* and a *Wonder*^b, מופת a *strange Sight*; which, if transacted in Idea only, or told as a *Parable*, was no *Sight* to the People at all^c. *Fourthly*, It may be added, that if there were not these Reasons for the *literal* Interpretation, yet it is a safe and good Rule of interpreting, never to recede from the *literal* Construction without a manifest Necessity; and there is no such Necessity in this Case, because the Objections made to it, are all capable of receiving a just and rational Answer, as may appear from what follows:

One pretended Difficulty is, the great *Indecency* of the Prophet's going *naked* about the Streets of *Jerusalem*. But to this it has been answered, that there is no Necessity of supposing that he went altogether naked: The *Hebrew* Word does not require any such rigorous Construction: Besides, if the Sense were, *quite naked*, there would have been no need to add *barefoot*.

^z Isa. xx. 2.

^a Ibid. xx. 3.

^b Ibid.

^c Vid. *Witsii Miscellan.* Vol. 1. p. 89. *Vitringa* in loc.

Those are said to go *naked*, in the Scripture Phrase, who either go without their *upper Garments*^d, or have put off the Habit proper to their *Station*, or *Quality*^e. Criticks and Commentators have vindicated the Observation at large^f. The Prophet therefore went not abroad quite naked, but *half naked*, (a fit Type of the Captivity, for Captives are very rarely stripp'd quite naked) having nothing on but a slight inner Garment; which might be strange and unusual, but was neither absurd, nor immodest.

Another seeming Difficulty is, that he should do this for *three Years* together, which appears to be a very needless Waste of Time for the delivering a single Prophecy, not to be understood in this Way till the three Years End; which yet might have been otherwise dispatch'd, and competently understood in three Days, or Hours, or even less. To this it may be answered, that the *Hebrew* Text does not say that *Isaiab* so walked for *three Years* together: But the *Masorite* Punc-

^d John xxi. 7. Acts xix. 16. Mark xiv. 52. *conf.* Gen. ix. 22, 23. Job xxii. 6. Matt. xxv. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 11. James ii. 15.

^e 1 Sam. xix. 24. 2 Sam. vi. 20.

^f *Witsii* Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 89. *Vitringa* in Isa. Vol. 1. p. 596. *Noldii* Concord. p. 917. *Guarin.* Grammat. Hebr. Tom. 2. p. 240, 241. *Glassius* Lib. v. Tract. 1. c. 16. p. 1923. *Le Cene* Projet d'une nouvelle Version, p. 583. *Rasi*, his Translator, (p. 280.)

a Type and Exemplar of three Years upon Egypt and Cush. So that what *Isaiah* did, was to signify that a three-years-Calamity should be brought upon the *Egyptians* and *Cushites* by the King of *Affyria*. That was what the Prophet intimated by going *naked*, and *barefoot*. How long, or how often, is not said. It might be *three Days* togetherⁱ, or *thrice* in the same Day: But it was in such a Way as prefigured *three Years*. If the Reader would see this Matter discussed more at large, he may consult the very learned and judicious *Vitringa* upon the Place.

It may still be pleaded in Opposition to the *literal* Construction, that tho' the Prophet be supposed to have gone but *half naked*, and for *three Days* only; yet even that must be thought to carry an Appearance of a frantick, or foolish Man, and would not well comport with the Gravity of so high and so eminent a Prophet of God. But to this it may be answered, that if there had not been some appearing Impropriety in the

ⁱ Tantum teneo, probabile esse, Prophetam se hac specie per triduum publicè ostentasse, etsi id in Textu non exprimatur: Ut triduanus ille incessus Prophetæ triennalem Afflictionem *Ægyptiorum* & *Cushæorum* figuraret. *Vitringa* in loc. p. 598.

“ God bid him loose the Sackcloth, &c. probably for three Days
“ together, &c. We suppose the Time of the Prophet's Nakedness
“ (or three Days) was typical, as well as the Action. *Bishop Chandler's Defence of Christianity*, p. 204, 205.

Action, something seemingly inconsistent with the Character of so grave a Man, it might not have answered the Purpose it was intended for. The Prophet, who otherwise (thro' the Iniquity of the Times) could scarce obtain to be heard, or attended to, was to appear in an uncommon Garb, and with something particular in his Manner, to strike the Eyes, and to awaken the Observation of all around him. This perhaps might expose him to the *Derision* of unthinking and ignorant Men, that could not see to the Bottom of it: But the wiser and more judicious apprehending the Design, would admire and honour him the more for it. Let it be called putting on the Guise and Fashion of a *mad Man* or an *Idiot*; very wise and excellent Men may sometimes find Reason for so doing: But if there had not been some Impropriety, or Strangeness in the Thing, it may be said that the Prophet would have been an *Idiot* indeed, to expect (in such Circumstances as we now suppose) any extraordinary Notice to be taken of it, or Regard paid to it.

Thus far I have been pleading for the *literal* Construction, endeavouring at least to do Justice to it, by representing fairly to the intelligent Readers, what may be said for it. But I intend not therefore to set aside the two other Construc-

tions, as deserving no further Notice. Let them also have a fair and full Hearing, and then let the Readers judge.

2. Some, as I said, interpret the whole Thing as transacted in *Vision*. Of this Mind was the famous *Maimonides*, as may appear from his Words in *Buxtorf's* Translation^k: And he is therein followed by other *Jewish* Interpreters. Our learned Countryman Mr. *Smith*, in his *Select Discourses*, follows the same *Hypothesis*, quoting *Maimonides*, with Approbation, for it^l. Now, upon the Foot of this Construction, it is supposed, that *Isaiah* in prophetick *Dream* or *Vision*, heard God speaking to him, (like as St. *Peter* heard a *Voice*, and saw a *Vision*, while he lay in a *Trance*^m) and that in *Idea*, he transac-

^k Proinde non nisi in *visione* Prophetiæ factum fuit. Idem judicium est de eo quod dicitur: *Quemadmodum ambulavit servus meus Isaias nudus & discalceatus*; utique in *visionibus* Dei & hoc factum est. Qui vero minus firmo judicio sunt præditi, illi hæc omnia ita intelligunt ac si Propheta narraret quid sibi injunctum fuerit, & quid re vera fecerit. *Mamonid. Mor. Nevoch. P. 2. c. xlii. p. 323.*

^l “Therefore this was done only in a prophetical *Vision* (speaking of what *Ezekiel* did). The same Sentence likewise be passeth upon that Story of *Esaiah*, ch. xx. 3. his walking naked and barefoot: “Wherein *Esaiah* was no otherwise a Sign to *Ægypt* and *Æthiopia*, “or rather *Arabia*; where he dwelt not, and so could not more literally be a Type therein than *Ezekiel* was here to the Jews. *Smith. Select Disc. p. 228.*

^m Acts x. 10, 17.

ted all that God so ordered him to do. He put off his Shoes, and his upper Garment, walked *naked* and *barefoot*, as in a Dream; and afterwards reported this prophetick Dream, or Vision, for the Instruction of the *Jews*; like as St. *Peter* also reported his for the like Purposesⁿ. And as St. *Peter* rehearsing the Matter of his Vision to the Brethren, served the Purpose as effectually as if the Brethren themselves had seen it, so *Isaiab*, rehearsing his Vision to the *Jews*, might as effectually serve his Purpose, as if they themselves had seen him acting the Thing related. In this Way of interpreting the Prophet, all the Difficulties of the *literal* Construction are struck off at once; and therefore this *visional* Interpretation appears to be preferable to the other, if it be not it self clogged with other Difficulties as great as those. But there are some Objections to be made to it; which being much the same as may be made also against the *parabolical* Construction to be next mentioned, I may here pass them over, and consider them there.

3. The third Construction then may be, that this Narration of the Prophet is nothing else but a *Parable* set down by way of Narration, as Parables use to be. It is first to be observed, here

ⁿ Acts xi. 4, 5, &c.

appear to be two Parts, the *Parable* it self, in Verses 1, 2. and the *Interpretation* or Application of it in the Verses following. When the Prophet *Nathan* delivered the Parable of the *Ewe Lamb* to *David*, he immediately subjoined the Interpretation of it, applying the whole to King *David*. In like Manner, when *Micaiah* had entertained *Ahab* with a feigned Narration, or *Parable*, he afterwards added both an Interpretation and an Application of the Case in Fiction, to the Case in Fact p. Now, here in *Isaiab*, a Story, or Parable, is first told to this Effect; that God came to the Prophet and ordered him to put off his Sandals and prophetick Garb and to walk naked and barefoot for *three Days*, or *three Years*, and *Isaiab* did so. Well: What means this Parable? The Meaning is, that the King of *Affyria* shall make *Egypt* and *Chush* go *naked* and *barefoot* for three Years. This God has intimated to you before-hand, under the Emblem or Figure of what has been told of *Isaiab*, that so you may have the more lively Idea of the Thing, and the better retain it. *Isaiab* is to you, in this Parable, the Figure and Emblem of what shall come to pass hereafter. Fix your Imagination first upon him, as going naked and barefoot so long together, and therein

see and bear in Mind what shall come upon *Egypt* and *Cush*, whom you trust to, and confide in for Deliverance and Protection, instead of trusting in God.

Now, taking the Narration as a *Parable*, and no more, it gives a lively Representation of the Thing intended, and may answer the Purpose as well or better, (because quicker, and told at once) than *Isaiab's* really walking naked and barefoot, might have done. In Confirmation hereof, it may be added, that it seems a very proper Method, to make the Prophet himself the Subject of the *Parable*, while he is delivering the Prophecy, and stands in Sight. The Representation is the more affecting, while the Thing is thus transferred in a Figure to the Prophet himself that relates it. The Prophet *Isaiab*, accordingly, speaking of himself and his two Sons, says, Behold, I and the Children whom the Lord hath given me, are for Signs, and for Wonders (*in Signa & portenta*) in Israel⁹. That is to say, Signs and Prognostications, prefiguring Things to come. מופת Ordinarily signifies a *Miracle*; but sometimes it denotes a *prognosticating Sign*^r, or Type: Which

⁹ Isa. viii. 18. compare Ezek. xii. 6, 11. xxiv. 24.

^r Deut. xiii. 1, 2. 1 Kings xiii. 2, 3. Isa. xlv. 25. See also Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 205, 210.

56 ISALIAH xx. 3, 4.

is a Kind of Miracle, if it amounts to a real and certain Prediction. And whether the Prophet be made the Figure and Exemplar in a *Parable*, or in *real* Action, it seems that he is equally *כִּיפּוּת* either Way: So that there appears no just Objection to be drawn from the strict Sense of that Word, against interpreting the Thing in the Way of *Parable*.

A further Recommendation of the *parabolic* Construction is, that the *Unity of Time* is best preserved by it. In Verses the first and second of that Chapter, it is noted, that in such a particular Year, and at the precise Time of the Year, when *Ashdod* was besieged and taken by *Tartan*, the Lord spake by *Isaiah* (or to *Isaiah**) ordering thus and thus: And in Verse the third, as if it were the Continuance of the same Revelation, it is added, **And the Lord said, like as my Servant Isaiah hath walked,** &c. One would have expected, that if this second Part of what God spake had been delivered *three Years*, or but *three Days* after the first Part, that the Prophet should have taken some Notice of the Distance of Time, and should have expressed it thus; that *after three Years*, or *three Days*, the Lord came again, and *said*, &c. Like as we find in *Ezekiel*†, where

* See Noldius, p. 916.

† Ezek. xii. 8.

the *second* Time of God's coming is noted, as well as the *first*; one in the *Evening*, the other in the *Morning*. But here the Thing is told in such a Manner, as if the Lord had said all that he is there represented to say, at one and the same Time. This is easily accounted for, if we interpret it in the Way of *Parable*, but not so easily on any other Hypothesis. For, in the Way of *literal* Construction, some *Years*, *Days*, or at least *Hours*, must have passed between God's speaking in Verse the *second*, and his speaking again (tho' it is not said, *again*) in Verse the *third*. And those that interpret it in the Way of *Vision*, must allow as much Time as was necessary for a Succession of Ideas in the Prophet's Mind, first for his *loosing* his *Sackcloth*; next, for his *putting off* his *Shoes*; and then for his imaginary *walking* three Years, or three Days, about the Streets of *Jerusalem*: Which is a Difficulty in that Construction. But taking the whole to be a *Parable*, there is no Difficulty at all in that Respect: For both the Parable and the Interpretation were then dictated at once, and would take up no more Time in delivering to the Prophet, than he afterwards spent in delivering the same to the People.

Such are the Reasons assignable for the *parab-
olical Interpretation*: And there appears to be but

one very material Objection against it, that it seems to be making too bold with the Text, since the Story is told in as plain and express Words as any real History can be told in. But hereto it may be answered, that such is the Way of delivering *Parables*. Such was *Nathan's* Parable delivered to King *David*: And such is the Parable of the *rich Man* and *Lazarus*. And such is the Story of *Ezekiel's* digging in the Walls of the Temple of *Jerusalem*, when he was really at *Babylon*^u. There was no Danger of such *Parables* being taken for *real* History, by the Persons to whom they were given: For they understood the Manner of speaking perfectly well, having been much accustomed to it^w. Besides, the Interpretation and Application immediately following the Parable, were sufficient to intimate that the whole Narration was *emblematical*, and not real History.

^u Ezek. viii. 8. See Stillingfleet's Letter to a Deist, p. 131, 132. and Jenkins, Vol. 2. p. 52, 53.

^w Familiare est Syris, & maximè *Palæstinis*, ad omnem Sermonem suum *Parabolas* jungere: Ut quod simplex præceptum teneri ab Auditoribus non potest, per Similitudinem Exemplaque teneatur. *Hieron.* in Matt. xviii. 23. Tom. 4. p. 85.

See Lightfoot on Matt. xiii. 3. Vol. 2. p. 193.

Vitringa Observ. Sacr. l. iii. c. 19. p. 762.

Vitringa de Vet. Synagog. p. 678.

Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 197.

Thus

Thus far I have been pleading in behalf of the *Paraboli- cal* Construction, that, by laying before the Reader the several Pleas for three several Constructions, I may be assistant to him, in some measure, for the passing a true Judgment. I am of Opinion that the *second* of the three, which I call the *visional*, may very justly be thrown out as useless, since it answers no Difficulties but what are as well answered by the *third*, but has some Difficulties of its own more than the third has: So the Dispute will lie between the *first* and the *third*, between the *literal* and the *paraboli- cal* Construction. *Maimonides* and his Followers are undoubtedly too rash in rejecting the *literal* Interpretation as absurd, or foolish: And others may be thought rather too scrupulous in judging it absolutely necessary to adhere to it. Very considerable Men have judged differently in this Matter; not because the Difficulties here or there are insuperable, but because they are not so; and because either Construction may be so reasonably defended, as to look very plausible. Such as lay it down for an inviolable Maxim that the *literal* Construction ought never to be receded from but upon very *great Necessity*; Such, I say, must of Consequence close in with the *literal* Construction of this Place, which

carries no Absurdity in it, nor any Thing highly improbable: While such as think it sufficient to go upon the fairest Probabilities, (be it for, or against the *Letter*) may incline in this Case to take the *parabolical* Construction, rather than the *literal*. But I leave it to the Readers to determine as they see Cause, after weighing the Reasons on both Sides. The main Body of Divines, and Criticks have declared for the *literal* Interpretation, as preferable; chiefly because there is nothing in the Text, or Context which directly intimates that it was a mere *Vision*, or *Parable*: A safe Rule to go by in such Cases*. I have dwelt the longer on this Article, because several more of like Kind will come up in their Turns: And if I have herein exceeded my usual Bounds, This, as first occurring, was the properest Place for it; and my doing it here will shorten my Work as to the rest, which are to follow in their Course.

* Ubi *Visiones*, *Ænigmata*, *Parabolæ* & *Schemata* exponuntur, Spiritus S. de figurato dictionis genere ut plurimum Lectores admonuit; vel per disertam denominationem, vel per *ἐπεὶ* & *Parabolæ* explicationem, vel per totius contextus structuram, vel per allegationem alibi factam, vel denique per alias a Textu elucentes *διὰ τῶν* notas. *Carpzov.* Introd. ad Libr. Bibl. P. iii. p. 352.

ISA. lxiii. 17.

O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy Ways? I once thought to have omitted this Text, because, as I have here cited it, it carries no Difficulty in it. But our Objector, by curtailing it, was in hopes to make it serve his Purpose. He quotes it thus: *O Lord, thou hast made us to err*^y; cutting off the rest which explain the Meaning: And his Intent in producing it, is, to prove that God *deceived* his Prophets, and his Prophets the People. It is visible at first Sight, that the Text is foreign to his Point. The Meaning is no more than this: “O Lord, why hast thou so long deserted us, “permitting us^z, all the while, to go astray from “thy Commandments? It is a pathetick Expostulation with Almighty God, begging of him to return to his sinful People, to convert and heal them. If it be objected, that the Words are express that *God made us to err*, it is allowed to be so in the *English*: But if the Translators

^y Christianity as old, &c. p. 256.

^z Ὁ προφήτης πάντα ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ ἀναφέρει· ἔχ' ὡς τὸ θεὸς αἵτις ἡμῶν γνομήν τῷ ἀναστάνειν· ἀλλ' ἐνδιδόντος καὶ συγχωρῶντος ἐκάνα προφῆτην ἢ ἂν τις αἰσῇ. ὡς τὸ μὲν αἵτις ἔχει ἐξ ἡμῶν, τὸ δὲ ἀναφορὰν ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ. Euseb. in loc. p. 583. conf. Origenis Philocal. c. xxi. p. 56.

had

had chosen rather to say, *suffered* us to err, as *Le Clerc* has ^a, (after *Junius* and *Tremellius*, and *Piscator*) they might have done it without injuring the *Letter*, or breaking in upon the Rules of *Grammar* or *Criticism*^b, and would have thereby better expressed the true Sense of the Passage. But it would be launching out into a beaten Common-place, to proceed farther on this Point ; so I forbear. If the Reader desires more, he may find enough among Commentators upon the Text, and especially in the learned *Vitringa*.

JEREM. iv. 10.

Then said I, ah Lord God , surely thou hast greatly deceived this People, and Jerusalem, saying, ye shall have Peace; whereas the Sword reacheth unto the Soul. This Text looks much more to the Objector's Purpose, than the former does ; and is, at least, pertinently alledged^c, in order to prove that Scripture represents God as *deceiving* the Prophets and People.

^a Cleric. in loc. *Quare nos pateris, Jehova, aberrare a viis tuis ?* See also, *Le Cene Projet*, &c. p. 468. *Ross*, p. 132, 220.

^b *Vid.* *Glassii Philol. Sacr.* l. iii. Tract. iii. can. xi. p. 773. *Guarin. Grammat. Hebr.* Tom. 1. p. 522.

^c *Christianity as old*, &c. p. 256.

But

But to assail this seeming Difficulty, it may be proper to observe in the Entrance, how, or upon what Occasion, these Words are brought in. *Jeremiah* in that Chapter foretels the coming of *Nebuchadnezzar* upon *Judah* and *Jerusalem*: He is the **Lion**, who was to **come up from his Thicket**, to make the Land of *Judea* desolate^d. The Prophet then goes on to describe the dreadful Consternation that the *King, Princes, Priests,* and *Prophets* of *Judea*, should be under, at that sad and unexpected Turn of Affairs. Hereupon, the Prophet himself breaks out into a very pathetick Ejaculation; **Ah Lord God, &c.** As to which, I may remark,

I. That the Words may be taken *interrogatively*. So the LXX of the common Edition, and *Jerom*, take them: The *Hebrew* will bear it, tho' the π *interrogativum*, the Note of Interrogation, be omitted, as in several other Places of like Kind^e. Our oldest *English* Versions, as well as the later one of the *Doway* Bible, render thus: **Hast thou then deceived this People?** &c. Indeed, the *Geneva* Translators preferred what we read at present: But then to qualify the seeming Harshness, they added an explanatory Note in the Margin; *By the false Prophets which promised Peace and Tranquillitie*:

^d Jerem. iv. 7.

^e See Le Cene, p. 151. Rols, p. 102.

64 JEREMIAH iv. 10.

And thus thou hast punished their rebellious Stubbornes, by causing them to hearken unto Lies which would not beleieve thy Truth. It were to be wish'd that the later *English* Translators had either not so often followed the *Geneva Version* in their over-scrupulous Adherence to the very *Letter* and *Phraseology* of the Original, or if they resolved so to do, that they had added some marginal Note also; For as too servile an Adherence to the *Letter*, in such Cases, requires a cautionary, or explanatory Note; so if no Note be intended, the Translation it self ought to be a little the *freer* and *bolder* in expressing the *certain Sense* of the Original, so as to answer the End of strict Version and Note, both in one. But this I offer with Submission to better Judgments, if ever a proper Time should come for revising, and correcting our last *English* Translation: Which, tho' a very good one, and upon the whole scarce inferior to any, yet is undoubtedly capable of very great Improvements; as Dr. *Wells*, Mr. *Blackwall*, and others, have intimated ^f. But to return.

^f *Wells's* General Preface to O. T. p. 5, &c.

Ros's Essay for a New Translation; being an Extract from the French of Le Cene.

Blackwall's Sacred Classics, &c. Vol. 2. c. iii. p. 161, &c. and Pref. xxi, &c.

As to this Text in *Jeremiah*, it might, as I humbly conceive, have been well rendred *interrogatively*: But if we take the Words as they lie in our Version, then the Sense is such as the *Geneva* Translators point to; excepting that instead of *causing them to hearken*, &c. it should only be said, *suffering them*, &c. Or else the Sense may be, as some very good Criticks s have maintain'd, that God had *shown* in the Event, and *exposed* to open View, the Seduction of the People, by *disappointing* their fond Expectations rais'd by *false* Prophets^h. The Prophet *Jeremiah* himself, in the same Chapter, takes Care to remove all Pretence of charging God, by throwing the Blame upon the People themselves: **Thy Way and thy Doings have procured these Things unto thee: This is thy Wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy Heartⁱ.** Observe how this answers to Verse the 10th. There, the **Sword** is said to **reach unto the Soul**; here, the Reason for it is assign'd, *viz.* because their **Wickedness** had **reached** thither before. The People had been desperately wicked, would accept of no sober Coun-

^s See Glaffius Philolog. Sacr. lib. iii. Tract. 3. p 784.

Guarin. Grammat. Hebr. Tom. 1. p. 525.

Witfii Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 135, 138.

^h Populum istum, per Pseudopphetas pacem denunciantes, deceptum ostendisti. *Guarin. ibid.*

ⁱ Jerem. iv. 18.

sel, nor bear any just Reproof: They loved *smooth* Things, they delighted in *Flattery* and *Lies*; and therefore God gave them up to *strong Delusions*, and suffered them to be grossly imposed upon by *lying* Prophets of their own chusing; Prophets that **Spake a Vision of their own Heart, and not out of the Mouth of the Lord^k**; and that were wicked enough to say to the Despisers of God and Goodness, **The Lord hath said ye shall have Peace,—no Evil shall come upon you^l**. By such *lying* Prophets as these, God suffered those to be deceived who loved to be deceived, those that **walked after the Imagination of their own Hearts^m**. In Scripture Phrase, God is frequently said to do what he *permits* to be done, because all Events are in his Disposal, and wait his Pleasure. The Device may be Man's: But God directs it to better Purposes than Man could think of, and so by taking the Thing into his own Hands, and governing the Issue of it, he makes it in a certain Sense, *his own*. I may observe, by the Way, that *Le Clerc* takes too much Freedom in his Comment upon this Text, and seems to forget the Reverence due to an inspired Writer. He fancies that the Prophet was almost besides himself, being overwhelmed with Grief and Anxiety,

^k Jerem. xxiii. 16.^l Ibid. xxiii. 17.^m Ibid.

JEREMIAH vii. 22, 23. 67

and so uttered such Things as he would not have done upon cool and serious Reflexionⁿ: Which is reviling God's Prophet, without any probable Colour, or Handle for it, and betraying too much of an unbecoming Levity of Mind. For why must the Prophet's Words be strained, in this Case, to mean more than they really say, and more than the grammatical Construction, and *Hebrew* Idiom require?

JEREM. vii. 22, 23.

I spake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them, in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings or Sacrifices: But this Thing commanded I them, saying, obey my Voice, &c. The Objector passes a short Censure upon this Text; observing, that in the Old Testament, *Things commanded, are positively said not to be commanded*^o. Then he cites part of what I have here cited, leaving the Reader to

ⁿ Grotius interpretatur, *Sicisti* decipi, quia sæpe apud Hebræos verba activa *permissionem* tantum significant. Verum hic plus dicit propheta, præ terrore, & dolore vix sui satis compos, cum audiret Patriæ *exilium* nec sunt hæc ita capienda quasi sedato animo unquam censuisset a Deo verace posse quemquam decipi. — Sed anxius & perturbatus *Jeremias* ea dicit nunc, quæ nequaquam credebat. *Cleric. in loc.*

^o Christianity as old, &c. 1. 336.

68 JEREMIAH vii. 22, 23.

imagine that Scripture contradicts it self. But such as attend to the *Sense* of Scripture more than to the *Sound* of Words, will easily perceive how the Case stands. Sacrifices, which were but *part* of Duty, are here opposed to *entire* and *universal* Obedience. Now, the Thing which God required and chiefly insisted upon, was *universal* Righteousness, and not *partial* Obedience, which is next to no Obedience, because not performed upon a true Principle of Obedience. God does not deny that he had required *Sacrifices*: But he had *primarily* and *principally** required *Obedience*, which included *Sacrifices* and a l other Instances of Duty as well as That: And he would not accept of such lame Service as those Sacrifices amounted to; for that was paying him *part* only in lieu of the *whole*.

Or we may say, that Sacrifices, the *outward Work*, are here opposed to *obeying God's Voice*: That is to say, the *Shadow* is opposed to the *Substance*, *apparent* Duty to *real*, *Hypocrisy* and empty *Show* to *Sincerity* and *Truth*. Now, the Thing which God required and insisted upon, was *Obedience to his Voice* in every Thing: And he laid no Stress upon *Sacrifices* any farther than as

* *Negatives* are often thus put for *Comparatives*, Gen. xlv. 8. Exod. xvi. 8. 1 Sam. xv. 22. Hof. vi. 6. Matt. ix. 13. Joh. v. 45. See *Gram. Heb.* Tom. i. p. 573.

JEREMIAH vii. 22, 23. 69

considered as *Parts* of *true* Obedience. Sacrifices separate from true Holiness, or from a sincere Love of God, were not the Service which God required: For *hypocritical* Services are no Services, but Abominations in his Sight. He expected, he demanded *religious, devout* Sacrifices: While his People brought him only outside *Compliments* to flatter him, empty *Formalities* to affront and dishonour him. These were not the Things which God *spake* of, or *commanded*: The Sacrifices he spake of, were pure Sacrifices, to be offered up with a clean and upright Heart. Those he required, and those only he would accept of, as real Duty and Service. The meer *Opus operatum*, or outward Work of offering up Sacrifices, from a corrupt Heart, was no *sacrificing to God*, any more than the *fasting* for Strife and Debate, was *fasting to God* ^p. Such Sacrifices God detested, being a Semblance only of Duty, and not the Duty required; a Corruption and Profanation of a holy Rite, rather than a just and proper Conformity to it. Sacrifices so profaned, carried more of *human* Corruption than of *divine* Institution in them, being a kind of *Mock-worship* which Man had contrived, and not the *true Worship* which God had enjoined. Enough, I presume, hath been said to take off

^p See Zech. vii. 5. Isa. lviii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

70 JEREMIAH vii. 22, 23.

the Objector's Cavils against the Text. But for the further preventing some Mistakes which others have fallen into in relation to the same Words, I may just observe:

1. That Such as have drawn an Argument from this Text to prove that Sacrifices have been owing to *human* Invention, not to *divine* Appointment, have mistaken the Point. Sacrifices were of *divine* Institution; but the *Corruption* of them is of *human* devising. God appointed *religious* and *devout* Sacrifices, and Men invented *Hypocrisy* and *Deceit*, debasing the true Worship which was of divine Original, into formal and empty Worship, which in reality is no Worship.

2. I may next observe, that such as argue from the same Text for *moral* Duties in opposition to *positive*, are as widely mistaken as the Former: For the Text in its true and full Intent, condemns *moral* Performances as much as *positive*, whenever separate from, or opposed to true filial Obedience. *Obedying God's Voice* is the one Thing requisite, and is what God commands and insists upon in all Services, whether of a *moral*, or *positive* Nature. *Moral* Performances are of no Value but when they are really Parts of sincere Obedience towards God. If Men are temperate in Diet, chaste in their Conversation, just in their Dealings,

Jeremiah vii. 22, 23. 71

ings, or the like, only for worldly Views, for Health, or Safety, or out of Ostentation and Vain-glory, or for fear of human Laws; such Morality being all out-side Show, or secular Convenience, is not true Morality, nor the Obedience which God requires. Or if Men give Alms, and are strict Observers of some *moral* Precepts, in hopes thereby to compound with God, to be excused from other Duties, and to procure, as it were, a License to sin, such *moral* Performances are nothing worth; they are not the *true* Services which God requires, but are as empty and superficial as the *Opus operatum* in *positive* Duties.

On the other Hand, it must be owned, that whenever *positive* Duties are so performed as to become *true Obedience*, they are as valuable in God's Sight, as any *moral* Performances whatever, because *obeying God's Voice* is all in all. *Obedience* was the Thing insisted upon with *Adam*, with *Abraham*, with *Saul*, and with many others, in *positive* Instances; and God laid as great a Stress upon Obedience there, as in any *moral* Instances whatsoever. To conclude then, *moral* Performances without the Obedience of the Heart, are nothing; and *positive* Performances without the like Obedience, are nothing: But the sincere *obeying* of God's *Voice* in Both, is
true

true Religion, and true Morality. Such is the Doctrine of the Text which we have been considering: And while it is thus understood, it carries in it no Repugnancy either to other Scriptures, or to the Rules of right Reason.

JEREM. xiii. 4.

Take the Girdle which thou hast got, which is upon thy Loyns, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a Hole of the Rock — &c.

This is another of those Texts which, according to our Objector, represents the Prophets as *acting like mad Men, or Idiots* &c. Here again I must observe, that there are three several Ways of interpreting, which I have before called *literal*, *visional*, and *parabolical*: And I am next briefly to examine the Merits of each.

I. The Commendation of the *literal* Construction lies in these Particulars; that it is *literal*; that it is *ancient*; and that it affords *rational Solutions* of the Difficulties objected to it. The *literal* Construction of a Text always claims the Preference before any other, if there be not some very weighty Reason against it, or some Intimation in the Text it self, that the Words

^a Christianity as old, &c. p. 255.

are figurative, or enigmatical. This is an allowed Rule of Interpretation, founded in the very Nature and Reason of Things: And it is pleadable here, as well as in all other Cases of like Kind. The *Antiquity* of the literal Construction appears in some measure from the ancient Fathers, *Cyril of Alexandria*^r, and *Theodore*^s; tho' *Jerom* before them Both, is an Exception, and perhaps the first. The seeming Difficulties which lie against the *literal* Construction, are several, and admit of various Answers.

Jerom objects, that such *Girdle* as is here mention'd, was a *Woman's Girdle*^t, and not suitable to a Prophet. But this is slight, since *Jerom* had no sufficient Grounds for saying it: For *Men* might wear *Linen Girdles*, and the High-Priest's was such^u. He further objects, that *Jeremiah* could not at that Time stir so far abroad, while *Jerusalem* (where he was) was closely besieged^w. But this Objection, as *Bochart* ob-

^r Cyrill. Alexandr. in *Oseam*. Tom. iii. p. 11. For tho' Cyril does not particularly mention this Place of Jeremiah; yet his general Pleadings for the literal Construction in other the like Places, are as applicable here:

^s Theodore in loc. Tom. ii. p. 189.

^t Hieronymi Proem. in *Osee*. *Hieremias accinctus Lumbari, veste muliebri*, &c.

^u Levit. xvi. 4. See *Bochart*: Oper. Tom. i. p. 955. Edit. Lugd.

^w Quomodo exire poterat, & ire tam longe, obsessa Hierusalem, extructis per circuitum munitionibus, fossa, vallo, atque castellis? *Hieron. Proem. in Oseam*.

74 JEREMIAH xiii. 4.

erves, is grounded on Mistake only: For the *Chaldeans* were not yet come, to lay Siege to *Jerusalem*, as appears from Verse 20. of that Chapter. To which may be added, that Chronologers now place this Prophecy in the first Year of *Jeboiakim*, 609 before the *Christian Æra**, and *Nebuchadnezzar* did not lay Siege to *Jerusalem* till the Year 606.

Others object, that it looks highly improbable, that so considerable a Prophet should be twice sent so long a Journey, (a Journey of near 200 Leagues) from *Jerusalem* to *Euphrates*, upon so slight an Errand, only for the Sake of *reporting* afterwards what he had done, when the reporting of a *Vision* would have served the Purpose altogether as well, with less Waste of Time and Labour. But to this it may be answered, that the *burying of the Girdle*, tho' that only is mentioned, might not be the whole of the Errand: For who knows what other Views, or Reasons, infinite Wisdom might have in it? Neither is it necessary to say, that *Jeremiah* went twice from *Jerusalem* to *Euphrates*: For he might stay in *Chaldea* till the second Time came for his going to the *Euphrates* about the Girdle.

If these Solutions do not satisfy, the learned

* See Bedford's Scripture Chronology, p. 673.

Bochart ^y has another, which seems to cut off all the considerable Difficulties at once. He observes, that פרת *Pbrath* may reasonably be supposed to stand for אפרת *Ephrath*, (as it is a common Thing for the initial *Aleph* to be so dropp'd in other Names of Places, or Persons) and then *Ephrath* may mean *Ephratah*, that is, *Bethlehem*, which was but five or six Miles from *Jerusalem*. So it was no great Labour for the Prophet to go thither once and again, upon God's Errand. To confirm this Criticism, he argues, that if the Text had intended the River *Euphrates*, it is somewhat strange that the Prophet should say (Verse 5.) that he hid the Girdle בפרת *in Euphrates*, when it was not in *Euphrates*, but in a *Rock* that he hid it, Verse 4. Again, he observes, that when in more than sixty other Places *Euphrates* is mentioned, it is called *The River*, or the *great River*, and in two Places only^z is simply called *Pbrath*, there is the less Probability that *Euphrates* should be here intended; especially considering that so uncommon an Injunction might have required a very particular and express Direction to ascertain the Place. This is the Sum of what *Bochart* has offered for his ingenious Solution of the Difficulty; and

^y *Bochart. Oper. Posth. p. 956.*

^z *Jerem. li. 61, 63. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 26.*

76 JEREMIAH xiii. 4.

I leave it with the Reader to judge of as he sees Reason. However, since the *literal* Construction may yet appear not altogether unexceptionable, I may next proceed to mention such other Constructions as have been offer'd; that so the Readers, having all before them, may consider, upon the whole, which of them appears the best and safest to acquiesce in.

2. St. *Jerom* was of Opinion, that all that is here told by the Prophet, was performed only in Idea, (*in Typo*) transacted in *Vision*^a. *Maimonides* also, the famous *Rabbi* of the twelfth Century, espoused the same Opinion^b. Tho' it is not the Opinion of all his Countrymen before or after him: For *Bochart*^c mentions *Solomon Jarchi*, and *Abarbenel*, as differing

^a Hieron. Proem. in Osee.

^b Sicut quod de *Abrahamo* legitur, fuit verbum ad Abrahamum in visione dicendo (Gen. xv. 1.) & in illa visione dicitur, & eduxit illum foras, & dixit; inspicere nunc coelum & numera stellas: Sicut, inquam, clarum & evidens est, quod in visione prophetica factum fuerit quod viderit, ac si educeretur e loco in quo fuit, ut videre posset coelum, & quod postea dictum fuerit, numera stellas; ita dico de eo quod *Jeremie* injunctum & in mandatis datum fuit, ut abscondat Cingulum in Euphrate, & quod cum absconderit; deinde elapso longo tempore iterum quaesitum illud iverit, & corruptum ac putrefactum invenerit (Jerem. xiii. 4, 5, 6.) ita, inquam, aio hæc omnia in visione Prophetica facta fuisse; neque *Jeremiam* e Terra *Israelis* in *Babyloniam* exivisse, aut *Euphratem* vidisse.

^c Bochart. Oper. Posth. p. 955.

from him; and he quotes Rabbi *Kimchi* as declaring directly against him^d. Nevertheless, several learned Men since, have thought it reasonable to interpret the whole, with *Maimonides*, of prophetick *Vision*. Our learned *Smith* particularly, in his *Select Discourses*, expresses an unusual Confidence in it, and a kind of Zeal for it^e, as the only rational Construction. Now the Reasons which recommend this Method of interpreting, are, *first*, that it removes at once all the seeming or real Difficulties of the *literal* Construction. *Secondly*, It seems that a prophetick *Vision* fully answers all the Intents and Purposes that the Prophet's *really* performing such Things could do:

^d Quod de cingulo dicitur, apte sensu reali intelligi potest, ut Propheta egerit planè uti ipsi fuerat a Deo præscriptum: Etsi magnus & illustris Vir & Doctor justitiæ, Rabbi scilicet *Moses Ben Maimon*, id omne visione Prophetica peractum scripserit. *Rabb. Kimch.* ap *Bochart.* ut supra.

^e His Words are, " So Jeremy xiii. we have there a very precise Narrative of Jeremiah's getting a Linen Girdle, and putting it on his Loins; and after a while he must needs take a long Journey to Euphrates, to hide it there in a Hole of the Rock: And then returning after many Days, makes a weary Journey to the same Place, to take it out again after it was all corrupted. All which could manifestly be nothing else but meerly imaginary, the Scope thereof being to imprint this more deeply upon the Understanding of the Prophet, that the House of Judah and Israel, which was nearly knit and united to God, should be destroyed and ruined. *Smith's Select Discourses*, p. 224.

It would be impertinent to pretend here, that symbolical *Actions* of a Prophet would be necessary to raise *Attention*, or would be more forcible than meer Narratives: For who, besides the Prophet himself, could see or observe all that the Prophet is supposed to have done, unless they also had attended him all the Way through both his long Journies? The Thing could no otherwise be notified to all the *Jews* at *Jerusalem*, but by the Prophet's *telling* it: And if he *reported* a *Vision*, it might have made as strong an Impression, and might as well have conveyed the intended Instruction, as his *reporting* a *real* Fact. Perhaps it might have answer'd the Purpose better in some *Respects*; because it would appear to many more *rational*, and more *credible*, than the other. It cannot be denied, but that this looks well, and is a very plausible Account of the whole Affair: And had the Text it self called it a *Vision*, there could be no further Doubt of it. But then it remains to be considered, whether the want of that single Circumstance be sufficient to make us think it was not a *Vision*, or whether there be not other Instances of prophetick *Visions* in Scripture, which are known only by the Circumstances to be such, and are not called so in Terms. So much in Favour of the *visional* Construction.

3. But there is yet a third Construction, the *parabolical* Construction, which deserves or requires to be heard in its Turn. Much of what has been pleaded for the last, is applicable to this also. For this removes all the Inconveniences of the *literal* one, as much as the other: And a *Parable* seems as well to answer the intended Purpose, as either the Report of *real* Fact, or the telling a *Vision*. But if it be objected that the *Word of the Lord* is said (in the first ten Verses of the Chapter) to have come to the Prophet full four Times, which argues that there were so many *real* *Visions*; it may be answered, that That is not more plainly said, than it is said that *Jeremiah* went to *Euphrates* once and again, and performed what he was there commanded to perform: Therefore the Argument is not stronger for so many *real* *Visions*, than it is for so many *real* *Facts*. But it is a common Thing for *Parables* to follow the Style and Manner of a true Narration. Why then may not the whole Narrative pass for a *Parable*, or an emblematical Narration, like *Micaiah's*, who represents the Lord as doing, and saying thus and thus, in a feigned Narration, but so contrived as to convey in a most lively and affecting Manner, the most important Truths? See above.*

* Pages 7, 8.

80 JEREMIAH xiii. 4.

There is one further Advantage common both to the *visional* and *parabolical* Construction, and which therefore might have been mentioned before, namely, that here we may understand by *Pbrath*, the River *Euphrates*, being properly chosen in the *Vision* or *Parable*, to intimate that the *Jews* were to be carried captive over that River to *Babylon*: But as to *Ephratah*, or *Bethlehem*, which the learned *Bochart* by Conjecture pitches upon (only to take off a noted Difficulty in the *literal* Way) it appears not what Relation that Place could have to the main Subject-matter of the Prophecy. And as to the Criticism upon the Phrase בפרת as if it must necessarily signify *in Euphrates*, rather than *by Euphrates*, there is no Certainty in it: For the *Hebrew* Particle ב undoubtedly signifies either *in* or *by*^f, according as the Circumstances of the Text require. Thus far, I have been pleading for the Way of Construction by *Parable*; not making it my own, but doing Justice, so far as I can, to it, and leaving it to the Reader to think of it as he sees Cause. I shall only add, that two very learned and judicious Writers of our own, Bishop *Stillingfleet* g, and Dr. *Jenkins* h, incline to the *parabolical* Construction,

^f See Noldii Concordant. p. 144.

ter to a Deist, p. 131, 132.

Vol. 2. p. 50.

g Stillingfleet's Letter

h Jenkins's Reasonableness,

JEREMIAH xv. 18. 81

as well here as in several other the like Scripture Instances; and they seem to have favoured this kind of Construction above the literal one, for such Reasons as have been now mentioned ⁱ.

JEREM. xv. 18.

O Lord— wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Liar, and as Waters that fail? The Objector lays hold of this ^k, as an offensive Passage: And I cannot say that he does it altogether without Reason. But it is an *English* Offence only: And I am sorry that our Translators did not chuse a juster rendring, or at least, a more decent Expression, when they might so easily have done it, and the Context it self persuaded to it. The Words may be translated thus: **Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a Disappointment** ^l, and as Waters that fail? Or, *Waters not sure*. It is well known that כִּזְב

ⁱ Bishop Stillingfleet speaks thus: " But you will say, These Things are related as plain Matters of Fact, with the several Circumstances belonging to them. It is true, they are so, but so Parables use to be. So was Nathan's to David; so is that of the Rich Man and Lazarus in the New Testament: So is Jeremy's going to Euphrates to hide his Girdle; for it is not very likely the Prophet should be sent eighteen or twenty Days Journey into an Enemy's Country for no other End.

^k Christianity as old, &c. p. 256.

^l Fies mihi ut Frustratio. Cocceius in Lexic.

M

often

often signifies, to *frustrate*, or *disappoint*^m: And it is no new Thing for *divine* Wisdom to frustrate and disappoint *human* Hopes, and *human* Expectations. Our Translators in *Isaiab* lviii. 11. do not say, *whose Waters lie not*, but *whose Waters fail not*; because they thought *lie* an improper Word to apply to *Waters*: And surely *Liar* is a Word as improper to apply to Almighty God, if they had rightly considered it. They might very justly in that Place of *Isaiab*, have rendred *disappoint not*, as here in *Jeremy* also, *Disappointment*. And it is observable, that here in *Jeremiah*, there is a plain Allusion to Brooks that dry up, and *disappoint* the thirsty Travellerⁿ. The Prophet by his Complaint in this Place, could mean no more than this, that God had in a Manner deserted him for a Time, had left him to struggle with Difficulties and Hardships unforeseen, or unexpected, thereby *disappointing*, in some measure, his Hopes of better Success. Having suffered much and long from his cruel Persecutors, he looks up to God, and pours out his Complaint before him in pathetick Strains, as if God had almost forsaken him, and as if the *Fountain of living Waters* had been in a manner dried up,

^m Job xli. 9. Isa. lviii. 11. Micah i. 14.

ⁿ Compare Jerem. ii. 13. xvii. 13. Psal. xxxvi. 10.

or had refused to send forth its enlivening Streams: A very just and elegant Way of describing the uncomfortable Condition which the Prophet at that Time lay under. But yet, as if he had said too much, he corrects himself presently after, and expresses his entire Confidence in the divine Promises to support and strengthen him, to **make him as a fenced brasen Wall** against his Adversaries, to **save, and to deliver him, and to rescue him out of the Hand of the terrible°**. To conclude this Article, Had but the Objector taken the Pains to read three Verses forwards to the End of the Chapter, he might easily have seen how little Foundation there was for finding Fault with what he had read in Verse 18. excepting only the Harshness of an ill-chosen Word in an *English* Translation.

JEREM. XX. 7.

O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. Here again, the Translation is harsh, and faulty. But the Margin had guarded the Reader against Misconstruction, or Offence, by the softening Word *enticed*, put there for *deceived*. Indeed, the Word *enticed*

° Jerem. xv. 19, 20, 21.

much better expresses the Sense of פתח in this Place, though it does not fully come up to it. The Occasion of the Words was this: The good Prophet had met with a large Share of ill Usage from an ungrateful People, for the faithful Discharge of his prophetick Office. Under these his calamitous Circumstances, he looks up to God, and appeals to him, the Searcher of Hearts, as his Witness, that it was not through any Ambition of his own that he had entred upon that invidious Office^P; nor had he taken upon him, of his own accord, to reprove his Countrymen: But all he had acted in that Affair, was done pursuant to a divine Call, and in pure Obedience to divine Command. He would gladly have declined it, or even have run away from it; but God would not suffer him. Wherefore here-upon he says, speaking to Almighty God; **Thou hast over-perswaded me, O Lord, and I was over-perswaded,** (so the Words, I think, ought to be rendred^Q) **Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.** The Passage carries in it a lively Idea of the Prophet's great Modesty and profound Humility, in not affecting high Things,

^P See Jerem. i. 6, 7, &c.

^Q See Lowth upon the Place.

Vitringa in Isa. viii. 11. p. 215.

Assembly's Annotations, and Pool's.

De Spagne Reformation de quelques Passages, &c. p. 22.

JEREMIAH xxvii. 2, 3. 85

or shining Offices, but submitting however to the Burden of them in Obedience to the Will of God. For what Purpose, then, could the Objector produce this Text? Let the Reader observe, and marvel: He produced it to prove that Prophets have been *deceived* by relying upon God's Word; and of course, that the People also have been deceived by relying upon the Word of those Prophets^r. Never were Premises and Conclusion less allied, or at greater Distance from each other.

JEREM. xxvii. 2, 3.

Thus saith the Lord to me, make thee Bonds and Pokes, and put them upon thy Neck: And send them to the King of Edom, and to the King of Moab, and to the King of the Ammonites, and to the King of Tyrus, and to the King of Zidon, by the Hands of the Messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah King of Judah.

This is another Text which the Objector finds fault with, as making the Prophets act like *mad Men*, or *Idiots*^s. But his Censure here also, is without Foundation. As to the Nature of the Command here given by God to the

^r Christianity as old, &c. p. 256.

^s Ibid. p. 255.

Prophet,

86 JEREMIAH xxvii. 2, 3.

Prophet, I take it to be in part figurative and metaphorical; signifying in a lively Way what should be the Fate of *Zedekiah* and the other Kings in League with him. *Jeremiah* is commanded in another Place^t, to take the Wine-cup of God's Fury, and to cause all the Nations, whom he should be sent to, to drink it: And it follows, Then took I the Cup at the Lord's Hand, and made all the Nations to drink, &c. Which means only, that he prophesied against them, and pronounced their Doom. In like Manner, his sending the Yokes and Bonds to the Princes mention'd, seems to mean nothing more than his declaring from God the Fate of those Princes, by the Token, and under the Metaphor of Yokes and Bonds, to enliven the Idea, and to make the Prophecy more solemn, and emphatical. The Words of our learned *Smith*, being very apposite to our Purpose, are here worth the inserting. "Just in
" the same Mode with this (*of the Rechabites*)
" we have another Story told xxv. 15, 17, &c.
" of his taking a Wine-Cup from God, and his
" carrying it up and down, far and near *Jeru-*
" *salem* and the Cities of *Judah*, and the Kings
" and Princes thereof; to *Pharaoh* King of *E-*
" *gypt*, and his Servants, Princes, and People:

^t Jerem. xxv. 15, 16, 17.

Jeremiah xxvii. 2, 3. 87

“ To all the *Arabians*, and Kings of the Land
 “ of *Uz*: To the Kings of the Land of the
 “ *Philistines*, *Edom*, *Moab*, *Ammon*; the Kings
 “ of *Tyre* and *Sidon*, and of the Isles beyond
 “ the Sea, *Dedan*, *Tema*, *Buz*; the Kings of
 “ *Zimri*, of the *Medes* and *Persians*, and all the
 “ Kings of the North: And all these he made
 “ to *drink* of the *Cup*. And in this Fashion,
 “ Chap. xxvii. he is sent up and down with
 “ *Yokes*, to put upon the Necks of several
 “ Kings: All which can have no other Sense
 “ than that which is meerly *imaginarie*; though
 “ we be not told that all this was acted only in
 “ a *Vision*: For the Nature of the Thing would
 “ not permit any *real* Performance thereof.”

Thus far he: And what he says, appears to be very right in the main: Only he must, I suppose, have allowed, that *Jeremiah* made some such *Yokes* with *Bonds*, (as it is certain he did put one upon himself ^w) to render the Impression of what he was to say, the more strong and lively. It was customary for Prophets to prophesy by symbolical Actions, or hieroglyphick Figures; in so much that even the false Prophets took up the same Practice in Imitation of the true ones. The Instance of *Zedekiah*'s making himself *Horns* of

^v Smith's Select Discourses, p. 226.

^w See Jerem. xxviii. 10, 11, 12.

88 JEREMIAH xxvii. 2, 3.

Iron, and thereupon saying to *Abab*, as from the Lord, **With these shalt thou push the Syrians^x, &c.** is a very remarkable one. And even in the New Testament we have an Instance in the Prophet *Agabus*, who not content merely to foretel what should happen to *St. Paul*, represented it to the Eye, in dumb Show, by a symbolical Action, binding his own Hands and Feet with *Paul's* Girdle^y. I say then, that probably *Jeremiah* made several Yokes, and put one upon his own Neck, when he delivered his Errand: And his so delivering the Prophecy, was *sending the Yokes* to the Princes mention'd^z. For we cannot reasonably suppose that the Ambassadors took the Yokes at his Hands, and carried them to their respective Masters. God revealed his Design to the Prophet in such figurative, metaphorical Language, and the Prophet reported the same as he had received it. The Thing that God intended, might be as clearly understood in this Way, as in the plainer and simpler Style

^x 1 Kings xxii.

^y Acts xxi. 11.

^z Potest enim Phraseologia esse allegorica, *Jeremiæ* haud infueta (*conf.* xxv. 15.) ita ut *dimissio jugi & lororum per legatos*, sit Regibus per ipsorum legatos significare, servitutem hoc ipso signo ipsis portendi; cum præsertim vix credibile sit harum gentium legatos (qui & ipsi hariolorum blanditiis irretiti erant v. 9.) vel voluisse, vel ausos fuisse juga ab *Jeremia* oblata, Dominis suis perferre. *Henric. Michael. Bibl. Hebraic. Hallens.* in notis ad loc.

of a meet Prediction: But these ornamental Figures, and affecting Images, interspersed with it, added new Force and Dignity to the Prophet's Message, made it the more awful and solemn in the Delivery, and gave it the Advantage of a deeper and more durable Impression.

EZEK. iv. 1, &c.

Thou also Son of Man, take thee a Tile, (a Slate) and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the City, even Jerusalem, &c. The Objector is much offended at some Commands here given to *Ezekiel*, as making him also *act like a mad Man, or an Idiot*^a. The Prophet was to draw *Jerusalem* upon a *Slate*, was to lay *Siege* to it, to *build a Fort*, and to *cast a Mount* against it: He was to set a *Camp* against it, and *battering Rams* round it; and was to take an *Iron Pan*, representing an *iron Wall* between him and the City, and all this for a *Sign to the House of Israel*. He was moreover to lie three hundred and ninety Days on his Left, and then forty Days together on his Right Side, without turning himself once during the three hundred and ninety, or the forty Days; by the former, to re-

^a Christianity as old, &c. p. 255.

present God's bearing the Idolatry of the House of *Israel* three hundred and ninety Years, reckoning from the first *Jeroboam*; and by the latter, to represent God's bearing the Iniquity of the House of *Judah* forty Years, reckoning from the eighteenth of *Josiah*. And the Prophet was to *bake his Bread* with *Man's Dung*, or however with *Cow's Dung*, in token of the hard Circumstances that the House of *Judah* should be in a little Time reduced to. Now the Question is, how far this Description, or Representation, is to be taken *literally*, or *emblematically*; and whether the Orders which God gave were intended as *real* Commands and Figures also, or only as *Figures* of Things to come, under the Form of Commands, signifying not what the Prophet was to perform, but what God in his all-wise Counsels had determined to bring about.

1. As the Generality of learned Men have here pleaded for the *literal* Interpretation, believing that the Thing amounts to more than a prophetic Scheme of Speech; so it may be proper here, as in like Cases before, to take Notice of that Construction. *Witsius*^b and *Bochart*^c

^b *Witsius* Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 94, &c.

^c *Bochart*. Oper. Posth. p. 958.

See also, Lowth, Wells, in loc. *Carpzov*, Introd. P. iii. p. 50.
are

are two of its ablest Advocates. They plead the Authority of the ancient Fathers, *Basil, Chrysostom, Theodoret*: And they endeavour to shew that all that is here commanded, was practicable, and that the several Circumstances mention'd, carry no direct Repugnancy, or Absurdity with them. It would be tedious to enter into Particulars: I refer the Reader to the Authors themselves. It must be own'd, that the clearing of the *literal* Construction is first to be look'd to, and the Solutions offer'd are very ingenious and plausible, and such as ought to satisfy, if indeed there be a *Necessity* for maintaining the *literal* Hypothesis; and there are several Reasons brought to prove such *Necessity*^d. One of the strongest of them, is what Mr. *Lowth*^e mentions in these Words: "The Circumstances of this Vision prove that the Prophet did *really* perform what is here related; or else it could not have been a Sign unto the House of Israel, Verse 3." What Force there may be in this, or other Arguments offer'd in Favour of the *Letter*, may be consider'd presently.

2. For notwithstanding all that can be said on that Side, very judicious Interpreters chuse to

^d They are summ'd up in Witfius, p. 95, 96.

^e Lowth's Comment on the Place, p. 256.

interpret in the Way of *Vision*, or *Parable*. *Jerom* himself is at the Head of them, who declares some of the Things commanded to be impracticable^f, but understanding them too rigorously. *Maimonides* also, is exceeding positive in the Case^g, thinking the *literal* Construction absurd, and expressing himself with more Tartness than was necessary. He is seconded by several other learned Men; particularly by *Smith*^h, and by Bishop *Stillingfleet*ⁱ, and Dr. *Jenkins*^k, amongst us: Who conceive what is there related, to be a History only of the *Vision* it self, or to be a *prophetical Scheme*. Another learned Man, now lately, hath espoused the

^f *Rerum natura non patitur, ut quisquam Hominum per trecentos nonaginta dies in uno semper latere dormiat. Hieron. in Osee. i. 8.*

^g Ita quoque id quod dictum est ad eum: *Et tu sume tibi latrem, &c. & tu dormi super latus tuum sinistrum, &c. & tu cape tibi Triticum & Hordeum*: Quod item alibi ei dictum legitur, *novaculam hanc tonsoriam cape tibi, & transire fac super caput tuum, & super barbam tuam*; ita, inquam, ista omnia in *visione prophetica* facta sunt, ac vidit, vel visum fuit ipsi, se ista opera facere quæ ipsi præcipiebantur. Absit enim ut Deus Prophetas suos *stultis* vel *ebriis* similes reddat, eosque *stultorum* aut *furiosorum* actiones facere jubeat. Præterquam quod præceptum illud ultimum *Legi repugnasset*: Fuit autem *Ezechiel* Sacerdos magnus, & propterea ad duo illa præcepta negativa, de *non radendo angulo capitis, & angulo barbæ* obligatus. *Maimonid. Mor. Nev. Part ii. c. 46. p. 323.*

^h *Smith's Select Discourses, p. 227, 228.*

ⁱ *Stillingfleet's Letter to a Deist, p. 131.*

^k *Jenkins's Reasonableness, &c. Vol. 2. p. 51.*

same

same Sentiments, observing, that though we have in this Chapter an Account of such and such Commands given in Vision to *Ezekiel*, yet it is not said that he ever perform'd them¹: But that like as *St. Peter* in a *Vision* was commanded to do what he never did, (*rise Peter, kill and eat*) so *Ezekiel* was order'd, in the same Way, to do several Things which it was never intended he should perform. And as *St. Peter* reported his Vision for the Instruction of *Christians*; so *Ezekiel* reported his, for the Instruction of the *House of Israel*. Those emblematical Commands, so reported, became Signs, Figures, Resemblances, Prognostications of what had or should come upon *Israel*, or *Judah*, and in what Manner, and why: And thus they were Signs unto the *House of Israel*, signifying Things past, and prefiguring Things to come. It appears not necessary to say that the Prophet performed, so much as in *Vision*, the Things there commanded: But in a Vision he received such Commands, which he afterwards

¹ Jussus fuit *Ezechiel* per 390 Dies humi decumbere, in latus dextrum (leg. *Sinistrum*) inclinatus, & vinculis constrictus, pane item vesci super sterces humanum accensum cocto: At vero nusquam dicitur propheta mandatum illud exsecutus. Quare ambigi vix potest, quin eadem illius fuerit ratio ac ejus quod *Petro* datum Act. x. jugula & Comede immunda juxta ac munda promiscue. *Lakemacher* Observat. Philolog. Helmsted. 1730. Vol. 2. p. 68.

94 *EZEKIEL* iv. 1, &c.

considered not as formal Commands, but as *Types, Emblems, and Predictions* deliver'd to him in a preceptive Form, in order to imprint the Things intended the deeper upon his Mind, and to make the Representation thereof, to the People of the *Jews*, both more lively, and more affecting. In this Way of interpreting, all the Difficulties of the *literal* Construction are removed at once; and there appears to be no considerable Objection remaining, nor any Thing that can justly give Offence.

But I must observe, that our Objector has betrayed some Want of Attention, in saying that *Ezekiel* was to *mix Man's Dung with his Bread*^m: That would have been too absurd to be commanded even in *Vision*. *Man's Dung* was not order'd for the Prophet's *Food* (as this Gentleman too hastily imagined) but for his *Fuel**: And even That the Prophet excepted to, as *unclean*. Wherefore God permitted him to take other Fuel, namely, *Cow's Dung*, dried Casings, to *bake* his Bread with; which being clean, and wholesome Fuel, tho' not the most eligible, the Prophet had nothing to object against it. This Circumstance of the Story has been pleaded as an Argument in favour of the literal Construc-

^m Christianity as old, &c. p. 255.

* *Vid.* Bochart. Oper. Vol. 1. p. 329.

tion: For why, say Some, should the Prophet object to *Man's Dung* at all, if all was *Vision*, and none of the Things commanded, were to be *really* performed? But it may be replied, that a Prophet under a Vision or a Trance, (like as in a Dream) takes the Appearances as real for the Time being, and retains the same Sentiments of *clean* and *unclean*, as before. So St. Peter, in his *Trance*, or *Vision*, (*Acts* x.) made the like Objection as *Ezekiel* did, against eating any Thing *common* or *unclean*: And God gave Answers in both Cases respectively, such as were proper to each.

Objection also has been made to some Things mention'd in the third and fifth Chapters of the same Prophet *Ezekiel*: His *eating a Roll*, and *shaving* his Head and Beard, and then *weighing* and *dividing* the Hair; * with several other Circumstances of like Nature, which God commanded him to observe. They seem all to be *emblematical*, and nothing more; *seeming* Precepts, *real* Predictions: And divine Wisdom might the rather make choice of Things improper, or some of them impracticable, that the Prophet might the sooner

ⁿ Si sola imaginatione peracta fuerint omnia; non videtur tanta causa fuisse deprecandi ne stercus humanum excoqueretur: Quæ indubie major est, si cibum ita paratum re verâ ori suo ingerere Propheta debuerit. *Witsii Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 96.*

• *Acts* x. 14.

p *Ezek.* iii. 1, 2.

* *Ezek.* v. 1.

perceive that it was all *symbolical*; not directing him how or what to *act*, but how or what to apprehend, foresee, or foretel of Things to come. That about the *Roll*, plainly belongs to *Ezekiel's* first Vision; during which Vision, he ate the *Roll*, and therefore his eating was *visionary*, not *real*. And I may here note, what I should have noted before, that the Reader may do well to consider, whether all that is related in the fourth Chapter, be not also supposed, tho' not so plainly, to be transacted in Vision, by what is said Chap. iii. 22, 23. **The Hand of the Lord was there upon me, — and the Glory of the Lord stood there, as the Glory I saw by the River Chebar** ¶. This Description is much the same as in the first Vision. And it is further observable, that in Chap. viii. 1. it is said, **The Hand of the Lord God fell there upon me,** which are the introductory Words to a long Account of Facts, which were undoubtedly transacted in *Vision* only. If therefore the Prophet himself has obliquely intimated, as to Chap. iv, that he reported nothing but a *Vision*, there can then be no just Objection to the *visional* Construction of that Chapter: And the fifth Chapter is but a Continuation of the same Thing. But this I leave with the Judicious.

¶ Ezek. i. 1, 2.

In the twelfth Chapter of the same Prophet, we read of his *removing his Household-stuff by Night*, as a Type of the Captivity, and of his *digging with his Hand through the Walls of his House*, and his carrying off his Goods in *the Sight of the People*; as also of the People's coming to ask what he meant by such unusual Conduct. I see no Reason for thinking that the Prophet might not really perform all That and more, without Difficulty, and without forfeiting either his Discretion, or Gravity. Besides, the Manner and Circumstances of the whole Narrative, as it stands in the Prophet, (being very different from what we meet with in several others) plead strongly for the strict and literal Interpretation. It is no less than seven Times ^r repeated, that the Prophet was to do, or did thus and thus, *in the Sight of the People*: And he did it in the *Evening*, in the *Twilight* ^f; and *in the Morning* ^r after, God came to ask him whether the House of *Israel* had taken Notice of such his uncommon Behaviour, and had enquir'd what it meant. These and other Circumstances, appear to be very cogent Proofs of *real Fact*, and that it is more than a Narration of a *Vision*, or Recital of a *Parable*. And

^r Ezek. xii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

^s Ibid. xii. 7.

^f Ibid. xii. 8, 9.

O

therefore

98 *EZEKIEL* xii. 21, 22.

therefore I cannot but think that it is going much too far from strict Rule, to reject the *literal* Sense here; though I know that a very pious and learned Writer has done it^u, and that he had some Appearance of *Reason*, besides the Authority of some *Jewish* Interpreters, to countenance him in it.

EZEK. xii. 21, 22.

And the Word of the Lord came unto me saying; Son of Man, what is that Proverb that ye have in the Land of Israel, saying, the Days are prolonged, and every Vision faileth? Tell them therefore, thus saith the Lord God, I will make this Proverb to

^u The Words of *Smith*, in his *Select Discourses*, are as follow:
 “ Again chap. xii. we read of *Ezekiel’s* removing his Household-
 “ stuff in the Night, as a Type of the Captivity, and of his dig-
 “ ging with his Hands thro’ the Wall of his House, and of the
 “ People’s coming to take Notice of this strange Action, with many
 “ other uncouth Ceremonies of the whole Business, which carry no
 “ Shew of Probability: And yet, Verse the sixth, God declares up-
 “ on this to him; I have set thee for a Signe to the House of
 “ Israel: And Verse the ninth, Son of Man, hath not the House
 “ of Israel, the rebellious House, said unto thee, What dost
 “ thou? As if all this had been done really; which indeed seems
 “ to be nothing else but a Prophetical Scheme. Neither was the
 “ Prophet any real Signe but only imaginary, as having the Type
 “ of all those Fates symbolically represented in his Phanfie, which
 “ were to befall the Jews: Which Sense *Kimchi*, a genuine Com-
 “ mentator, follows, with others mention’d. *Smith* *ibid.* p. 228.

cease,

cease, and they shall no more use it as a Proverb in Israel: But say unto them, the Days are at Hand, and the Effect of every Vision. I have produc'd this Passage at full Length, that so the Reader may see the whole Meaning at once. Our Objector, according to his usual Fairness and Ingenuity, produces only a Part of it, in order to prove that God *deceived* his Prophets, by false Appearances. In another Prophet, (says he^w) *the Lord says, The Days are prolonged, and every Vision fails.* Yes, the Lord said it, as the Lord said by the Psalmist, *There is no God*^x; that is, the Lord condemn'd the *Fools* that said so, producing their Sayings in order to reprove them. The Words which our Objector cites as God's Words, were the Words of *Infidels*, who had turned the " Grace of God into Wantonness; " taking Encouragement from his Patience and " Long-suffering, to despise his Threatnings, as if " they would never be fulfill'd^y", and to deride his Prophets, as if they had prophesied in vain. Any Commentator almost that this Gentleman could have look'd into, would have corrected his Mistake, and might have prevented his exposing himself on this Head.

^w Christianity as old, &c p. 256.

^x Psalm xiv. 1. liii. 1.

^y Compare Isa. v. 19. Ezek. xi. 3. Amos v. 18. 2 Pet. iii. 3,

4. and see Lowth in loc.

EZEK. xiv. 9.

And if the Prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a Thing, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet: And I will stretch out my Hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my People Israel. The Remark made on this Text, is pointed, and smart: ^a *And if the Prophet is deceived, must not the People, who rely on that Prophet, be deceived?* Yes, certainly. But there was no Occasion for pushing the Point so far: It would have been Mortification enough to all true Lovers of the *Bible*, if it could but have been proved that God ever deceived his *Prophets*. There lay the Stress of the Thing; and there the Objector should have rested his Argument, if he had understood what he was upon.

The Reader may please to observe, that *Ezekiel* (or God by *Ezekiel*) is here speaking of *False-prophets*, or *Anti-prophets*, as described in the foregoing Chapter; such as had set themselves up in opposition to the true Prophets of God. They were Prophets that prophesied out of their own Hearts^b: They were foolish Prophets,

^a Christianity as old, &c. p. 256.

^b Ezek. xiii. 2, 17.

that

that followed their own Spirit, and saw nothing ^c of Truth. They were such as had seen Vanity and lying Divination, pretending to be God's Prophets, when the Lord had not sent them ^d. They seduced the People, saying Peace, and there was no Peace^e. I say, it is of one of the Prophets of that wicked Stamp ^f, that *Ezekiel* speaks in the ninth Verse of this fourteenth Chapter; as may easily be perceived by what is said in the same Verse, that God will stretch out his Hand upon the Prophet, and will destroy him ^g; And in the next Verse it is added, that the Punishment of the Prophet shall be even as the Punishment of him that seeketh unto him. Which Words carry a plain Intimation that the Prophet here spoken of, is understood to have been as bad as the Idolaters here supposed to consult him, and to have been as much a false Prophet, as they were false Worshippers; alike in Temper, and

^c Ezek. xiii. 3.

^d Ibid. xiii 6, 7.

^e Ibid. xiii. 10, 16.

^f Non putemus de vero Propheta dici, sed de Pseudo-propheta, qui *ψευδής* Propheta appellatur. Hieron. in loc.

^g See a remarkable Instance of this Kind in the Vengeance taken upon the false Prophet Hananiah, who had taught Rebellion against the Lord, and made the People to trust in a Lie, Jerem. xxviii. 15, 16, 17. And there are two more such Instances in the Punishments inflicted upon two other lying Prophets, Ahab, and Zedekiah, Jerem. xxix. 21, 22. See also Verses 31, 32. of the same Chapter.

Principles,

Principles, and therefore also to be punished alike^h, for encouraging Idol-worship under false Pretences to Inspiration.

Having seen then what kind of a Prophet the Text speaks of, it will now be the easier to explain the rest. God declares that he will **decei**ve (will *disappoint*, or will *infatuate*) such a Prophet first, and next *destroy* him: He will give him up first to *strong Delusions*, and then to *Destruction*. The Text may not improperly be rendred thus, according to *Pfeiffer*ⁱ, a judicious Interpreter, and learned Critick: **If the Pro-**

^h Salva res est, modo teneamus ad loc. cit. Ezech. non de veris Dei, sed Pseudopphetis, Idolorum cultoribus, Sermonem esse, quos æque ac consulentes ipsos, se decepturum Deus minatur; non errorem immittendo, sed non impediendo, permittendo, iustoque judicio excæcando, mendacemque mendaciis puniendo. *Carpzov. Introduc. ad Libr. Bibl. P. iii. p. 56.*

De eò Propheta agit qui consultoribus similis est; qui mercedem iniquitatis amans, amat iis quoque in erroribus & concupiscenciis suis adulari, dignumque se eodem judicio præstat. *Witfi Miscellan. Vol. 1. p. 137.*

ⁱ Recte judicat *Bohlii* continuator (*de Form. Rad. Diff. 13. S. 5.*) formalem significationem vocis פתח esse *simplex fuit*. Itaque Conj. transitiva Piel פתח significat *simplicem vel fatuum fecit*: Scilicet, juste privando intellectu, seu judiciaria subtractione Gratiæ illuminatricis; ut adeo verbum non exprimat malum culpæ, sed poenæ. Q. d. Quod si Propheta ita deliret, vel cum ratione insaniat, ut tale quid loquatur, ego dominus faciam ut prorsus stultescat, adimendo ipsi omne lumen rationis, &c. *Pfeiffer. Dub. vexat. p. 876. alias Oper. Vol. 1. p. 411. Conf. Le Cene, p. 155. Rôsi, p. 102.*

phet

phet be infatuated when he speaketh a Thing, I the Lord will infatuate that Prophet yet more. So the Sense of the Passage may amount nearly to the same with that of St. Paul^k, (or however the Verb here may bear the like Signification as ἐμώρανε there) God hath made foolish the Wisdom of the World: Or to that which *Isaiab* says; That frustrateth the Tokens of Lyars, (lying Prophets) and maketh Diviners mad; that turneth wise Men backward, and maketh their Knowledge foolish^l. But it is observable, that *Isaiab* subjoins, in the Verse immediately following, That confirmeth the Word of his Servant (*Isaiab*, his true Prophet) and performeth the Counsel of his Messengers^m. From whence may be perceived, how God illuminates the Understandings, and ratifies the Predictions of his own true Prophets, while he *infatuates* the Counsels, and *disappoints* the lying Confidence of evil Men and Seducers. So this Text of *Ezekiel*, rightly understood, makes nothing at all to the Objector's Purpose.

^k Ἐμώρανε ὁ Θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. 1 Cor. i. 20.

^l Isa. xlv. 25. *Fatuos eos redderet & insanos*: Sive quod eos ut insanos & fatuos publico risui exponeret, sive quod illos ob pœnitenda errata a se commissa in insaniam ageret. *Vitringa* in Isa. xlv. 25. p. 490.

^m Isa. xlv. 26. *Compare* 1 Sam. iii. 19, 20.

EZEK. xx. 25.

I gave them also Statutes that were not good, and Judgments whereby they should not live. The Objector hereupon saysⁿ: *Does not Scripture, if taken literally, suppose that God does Things of the greatest Moment, in Anger and Fury? Was it not thus he gave his favourite People Statutes which were not good, and Judgments by which they could not live?* The *Characteristicks* have a Glance at the same Thought^o, referring to Dr. *Spencer*, who understands this Text of God's *ritual* Laws; as several other Interpreters, ancient and modern, have too unwarily done. God intended not here his *own Statutes or Judgments*, but the *idolatrous* Statutes and Judgments, the corrupt Principles and Practices of the Heathen Nations, to which he sometimes gave up and abandon'd his own People, because they had first deserted and abandoned Him. That this is the true, genuine, and certain Sense of the Text, may be made appear, as follows:

1. It is observable, that God here describes these Statutes and Judgments by Characters di-

ⁿ Christianity as old, &c. p. 251.

^o Characteristicks, Vol. 3. p. 55.

rectly opposite to what he gives of his *own* in the same Chapter. For in the eleventh, thirteenth, and twenty-first Verses, he says, I gave them my Statutes, and shewed them my Judgments, which if a Man do, he shall even live in them. This is the Character he here gives of his *own* Laws, conformable to what he had given in *Leviticus*, where he says, *Ye shall do my Judgments, and keep my Ordinances to walk therein; I am the Lord your God: Ye shall therefore keep my Statutes and my Judgments, which if a Man do, he shall live in them*^p. Which Words are plainly to be understood of the whole System of the *Jewish* Laws, *ceremonial, judicial, and moral*; to the keeping of which, *Life* was promised; as to the breaking of any of them a *Curse* was annex'd^q. I say then, that the Character of God's *own* Laws, (*ritual* as well as others) was, that a Man should *live in them*. But now here in the twenty-fifth of this Chapter of *Ezekiel*, God says, I gave them also Statutes (not *my* Statutes) and Judgments, (not *my* Judgments) whereby they should not live, directly contrary to what he had before said, both here and in *Leviticus*, of his *own* Statutes at large. So that

^p Levit. xviii. 4, 5. Compare Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii. 12.

^q Deut. xxvii. 26. Gal. iii. 10.

it is highly unreasonable, or rather, absurd, to understand *Both* of God's own Statutes.

2. It is farther observable, that in Verse 11. of this Chapter, God had spoken of his giving his own Laws to his People; and he proceeds afterwards Verse 13, &c. to speak of the Frowardness of the People, and of their contemning those Laws of his, and of his Forbearance with them in the *Wilderness*, notwithstanding: But that at length, by way of Punishment to them, he did what he mentions Verse 25. **Wherefore, I gave them also Statutes that were not good, &c.** So that these Statutes cannot be the same with those Laws of *Moses* given before, but must be different Statutes.

3. After God's mentioning the Statutes *whereby they should not live*, he immediately adds, (Verse 26.) **And I polluted them in their own Gifts, in that they caused to pass through Fire** (to be sacrificed, or consecrated in Fire to *Moloch*^r) **all that openeth the Womb, that I might make them desolate.** This may be sufficient to intimate what kind of *Statutes* and *Judgments* God is here speaking of; namely, the Rites and Practices of the Heathen, whereby God *polluted* them, that is, gave them up to

^r See Verse 31. and Vitringa *Observ. Sacr.* l. 2. c. 1. p. 267.

their

their own Hearts Lusts, to defile and pollute themselves^s: Wherefore it is said in Verse 31. of this Chapter, *When ye offer your Gifts, when ye make your Sons to pass through the Fire, (to be consecrated in Fire) ye pollute your selves with all your Idols even unto this Day.* The *Israelites* had provoked God many Ways, and more especially by their frequent Idolatries; and therefore God gave them up to the vilest and most deplorable Idolatry of all, namely, that of sacrificing *their Sons and Daughters unto Devils*, offering them up as Burnt-offerings to *Moloch*. These were the Statutes **not good**: That is to say, the *worst that could be*; for such is the Force of that Expression according to the *Hebrew* Idiom^t. It is said moreover, Verse 18. of the same Chapter, *Walk ye not in the Statutes of your Fathers, neither observe their Judgments, nor defile your selves with their Idols.* Here we have mention made of *Statutes* and of *Judgments*, (the same Words in the *Hebrew*, as in Verse 25.) but not meaning God's Statutes or Judgments,

^s *Reddidit igitur Deus Israelitas impuros, quando occulto suo judicio permisit, ut cultu omnium impurissimo se contaminarent.* Vitring. ibid.

^t *Vitringa* Observat. Sacr. l. 2. c. 1. p. 265.

Vitringa in Isa. Vol. 1. p. 274, 486.

Pool's *Annotations* in loc.

but the corrupt *Customs* or *Manners* of their idolatrous Ancestors, such as God *permitted*, or gave them up to, because they chose such; as is intimated in Verse 25. I have observed, upon another Occasion, that נתן is frequently used in the *permissive* Sense: And therefore, **I gave them**, in Verse 25. may amount to no more than *I suffered* such Things*.

4. To all which may be added, that St. Stephen in the *Acts of the Apostles*^v, seems to be the best Interpreter of the Text now before us, when he says; **God turned, and gave them up to worship the Host of Heaven, &c.** That was giving them up to *Statutes* that were *not good*, and to *Judgments* whereby they *should not live*, to corrupt Customs, and impure Rites of the Heathen. To confirm which, we may observe, that by the Prophet *Jeremy*^w, God threatens the like Judgment to his offending People. **Therefore I will cast you out of this Land, into a Land that ye know not, neither**

* “ Not appointing or enjoining them, but permitting them to
 “ make such for themselves; much like that (Rom. i. 24.) giving
 “ up to a reprobate Sense: Or that 2 Theff. ii. 11. and Psalm
 “ lxxxi. 11, 12. Orders and Rules which they first invented,
 “ next approved, and lastly made their establish'd Religion; where
 “ all that they cou'd love in it, was, that it was their own.
 Pool's Annotat.

^v Acts vii. 42. Vid. Vitringa Observ. Sacr. l. ii. c. 1. p. 266.

^w Jerem. xvi. 13. Compare Deut. iv. 27, 28. xxviii. 36, 37.

ye nor your Fathers; and there shall ye serve other Gods Day and Night, where I will not shew you Favour. And in this very Chapter of *Ezekiel*, God says: So ye serve ye every one his Idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me, but pollute ye my holy Name no more with your Gifts, and with your Idols^x.

5. Though enough has been pleaded, as I conceive, from the Context it self, as well as from other Scriptures, and from the very Nature of the Thing, to prove that this Text ought not to be understood of the *ceremonial* Laws of the *Jewish* State, but of quite another Thing, yet it may not be improper to throw in an Authority or two, to back the Interpretation now given, that it may not be thought singular.

The *Chaldee Paraphrast* interprets the Text thus: *I cast them out, and delivered them into the Hand of their Enemies: And they went after their own foolish Lust, and made Statutes which were not right, and Laws by which you shall not live.* Among the Moderns, *Vitringa* has more particularly examin'd this Matter, to whose Observations I owe most that I have said upon it, and to whom for farther Satisfaction, I

^x Ezek. xx. 39.

would refer the Reader. I shall throw into the Bottom of the Page his general Judgment, or Decision, concerning this Text, in his own Words^y. *Le Cene* has another Solution, understanding the Words interrogatively, and making some other Alterations^z: But his Solution appears not so natural, or so just, as what I have mention'd, and therefore I need not say more of it.

HOSEA i. 2.

And the Lord said to Hosea, go take unto thee a Wife of Whoredoms, and Children of Whoredoms: For the Land hath committed great Whoredom departing from the Lord. The Objector remarks, (256.) *The Prophet Hosea, who was likewise a Priest, was bid to take a Wife of Whoredoms, (tho' that by Moses's Law was forbid a Priest) and Children of Whoredoms, and had three Children by his*

^y Chorus est eruditorum virorum qui de præceptis ceremonialibus hæc intelligunt, & Remotione Israelitarum ab Altari, utpote quibus substituti Levitæ sunt. Ego vero eos in pretio & honore habeo: Nihilominus tamen liberè profiteor, huic opinioni nunquam me potuisse consentire, ob rationes non leves sane & futes, sed solidas prægnantesque; ex serie Orationis, φεάσις insolentia, verbis aliis Textui immixtis, Antecedentium Consequentiumque nexu, & Scripturarum ἀλλυλαχία petitas. Vitring. Observ. Sacr. l. 2. c. 1. Compare also Lowth, and Wells.

^z *Le Cene* Projet, &c. p. 153, &c. *Ross*. p. 102.

Wife,

Wife, to whom the Lord himself gave Names.

It is no Argument of this Gentleman's Discretion, to lay the Stress of his Objection upon a Blunder in point of Fact. How does it appear that *Hosea* was a *Priest*? I know no Scripture, nor so much as Tradition for it^a. The Objector, perhaps, was thinking of *Ezekiel*, (who indeed was a *Priest*) and through Forgetfulness applied it to *Hosea*, as it struck his Fancy, and furnish'd him with something plausible against the literal Construction of the Text. *Hosea*, I conceive, was no *Priest*, but a *Prophet* only; and therefore might (notwithstanding what this Gentleman has urged) marry a *Wife of Whoredoms*: Tho' I understand here a *Wife* which after Marriage, however chaste before, should prove false to her Marriage Vow^b: And so the Case of *Hosea* and *Gomer* might be the apter Parallel to represent the Case of God and his People *Israel*.

It must be own'd, that Commentators and Criticks have divided upon this Matter; some believing it to be a Relation of *real* Fact, others looking upon it as a prophetick Scheme, a *Vision*, or a *Parable*. A clear and succinct Hi-

^a *Hosea was not of the Family of Aaron, nor Tribe of Levi, but of the Tribe of Issachar, as the Generality of the Learned seem to agree. See Carpzov. Introd. ad lib. Bibl. P. iii. p. 274.*

^b *See Lowth and Wells.*

story of the Dispute, together with a Summary of the Reasons offer'd by the contending Parties, may be seen in *Pococke* upon the Place. It would be tedious here, as well as superfluous, to repeat what he has said; and he has left but little Room for Addition. That very learned Man, finding weighty Reasons pleaded here and there, declined passing any decretory Sentence, being content rather to report, than to decide. Both Parts of the Question have considerable Advocates and Abettors: But still it must be owned, that the main Stream of Interpreters runs for the *literal* Construction. The learned *Carpzov*, Professor of Divinity at *Leipsick*, (a very good Judge of these Matters) is confident that what we here read in *Hosea*, is a Relation of *real* Fact; but at the same Time observing, that able and learned Men are no less confident the other Way^c. *Augustus Pfeiffer*, another eminent *Leipsick* Divine, (who wrote his *Dubia*

^c Certum tamen, non in *visione*, sed *re vera* conjugem fornicariam ab *Hosea*, jussu numinis ductam, & liberos ab ea suscepisse: Quod præter cæteros solidè evicit *Balth. Meisner*. (Commentar. in Hof. i. p. 75, &c.) discussis & profligatis, quas in contrarium *Polanus* urget, rationibus. Quocum confer *D. Steuberi* Disp. in 1. cap. Hoseæ T. V. Marpurg. Disp. xix. p. 235.

Utut me non fugiat, ingenti conatu oppositam nostræ sententiam astruere allaborasse *Joh. Tarnovium* exercit. Bibl. l. ii. class. 1. loc. viii. p. 605, &c. Qui videatur. *Carpzov*. Introd. ad libr. Bibl. P. iii. p. 277. *conf.* p. 284.

Vexata, A. D. 1685.) He also is a zealous Advocate for the *literal* Interpretation^d, condemning, with some Tartness, those that recede from it. There is another learned Foreigner^e who has now very lately (A. D. 1730.) maintained the literal Construction in a Way somewhat peculiar: For he supposes that God's Words to *Hosea*, tho' *imperatively* express'd, bear a *future* Signification; not *commanding* him to take a Wife of Fornications, but *predicting* to him that so it would be in such corrupt Times, and making use of that Instance in the Way of Emblem or Similitude, to set forth the Unfaithfulness of *Israel*, God's chosen People, towards him. Whether this Hypothesis may be of any real Service more than others, for the removing Difficulties, I pretend not to say: But it shows however, that the Author is strongly persuaded that there is a Necessity of maintaining the *Reality* of the Fact here related, as most of the Interpreters, ancient and modern, have

^d Pfeiffer. Dub. *Vexat*. Centur. iv. loc. 73. p. 433. Edit. ult.

^e Quasi igitur sic Prophetam Deus allocutus esset, verba accipio:
 " Tu de conjugio ineundo consilium nunc cepisti; fiet autem in
 " tam communi corruptela, ut Feminam accipias scortationi de-
 " ditam, & in uxorio etiam statu scortari non desituram." Sym-
 bolum igitur illa aptissima erit Gentis Israeliticæ, quippe Scorto
 Adulteræque simillimæ. *Lakemacher*. Observat. Philolog. Vol. 2.
 p. 70.

done. *Pococke* observes, that this is by the *Jewish* Expositors looked on as the ancient Opinion of some of their *Talmudical* Doctors: And amongst their later Rabbins, it is embraced by *Abarbinel*. The *Christian Fathers*, in general, may be said to espouse the same; As *Irenæus*^f, *Basil*^g, (or whoever is the Author of a Comment under his Name) *Austin*^h, *Theodoret*ⁱ, and *Cyril* of^k *Alexandria*: Though it appears from the two last mention'd, that the common Interpretation had been then called in Question by Some, whom they smartly condemn for disputing so plain a Case, as they supposed it to be.

Modern Criticks and *Commentators* on the same Side with those Fathers, are not easily numbred up; though *Pococke* and *Pfeiffer*, taken together, go a good Way towards it: And they two with *Steuberus*^l, are principally to be consulted

^f *Irenæus* contra. Hæres. lib. iv. c. xx. S. 12. p. 257. edit. Bened.

^g *Basil*. in Isa. c. viii. p. 933. Edit. Bened. N. B. The last Editor allows not the Commentary to be *Basil's*, but thinks it as ancient as the fourth Century, or fifth at the latest.

^h *Augustin*. contra. Faust. l. xxii. c. 80. p. 410.

ⁱ *Theodoret*. in loc. Oper. Tom. ii. p. 704.

^k *Cyrill*. Alex. in loc. Oper. Tom. iii. p. 11.

^l *Steuberus's Dissertation* has been lately reprinted in the first Volume of the *Theaurus Theologico-Philologicus*, among the Criticks, p. 938.

sulted in relation to this Matter, as having entred the deepest into it, and handled it most at large. I shall only add here, that the three latest Commentators I have looked into, *Calmet*, *Lowth*, and *Wells*, all contend for the *literal* Construction, for *real* Fact.

Notwithstanding what has been said in favour of the literal Interpretation, it will be but just to the Reader to give some Account of the figurative Construction, that he may at least know what it is, or what it means, and why some have gone into it. I cannot represent it to better Advantage than I find it already laid down in the Words of the learned Mr. *Bedford*, as follows^m:

“ In the first Chapter (*of the Prophet Hosea*)
 “ God, in a *Parable*, orders him to marry an
 “ adulterous Wife; and so he takes *Gomer* the
 “ Daughter of *Diblaim*; a Name which may
 “ be thus interpreted, a compleat and final De-
 “ solation, the Effect of a general Corruption,
 “ like *decayed Figs* which are good for nothing.
 “ In this *Parable* he is suppos’d to have Chil-

Pfeiffer, reckoning up the principal Moderns of his Side, names these following: *Lyranus*, *Ribera*, *Calovius*, *Pappus*, *Gesnerus*, *Meisnerus*, *Waltherus*, *Glassius*, *Finkius*, *Danhawerus*, *Steubarus*. To which I may add, *Le Cene* *Projet d’une nouvelle Version*, p. 436, &c. with his *Translator* *Ross* p. 114, &c.

^m *Bedford’s Scripture Chronology*, p. 646.

“dren, by whose Names he foretels several Calamities: First, the Ruin of the House of *Jebu*, by calling the first Son *Jezreel*, &c.” There is nothing in this Method of construing the Text, but what appears easy and natural, excepting only that it is not called a *Parable* in the Text it self, and so it may be thought too presuming to make such of it. *Jerom*ⁿ, among the *Christian* Fathers, and *Maimonides*, with several others among the *Jewish* Interpreters, have not scrupled to depart from the *common* Construction, preferring the *visional*, or *parabolical*: And they have been followed therein by several learned Moderns^o mention’d in *Pococke* and *Pfeiffer*; to whom more may be added that have appear’d since^p. Now, the Ground of the Difference between the two Kinds of Interpreters, seems to lie chiefly in this: One Side thinks, that while there is nothing plainly immoral or absurd in the Thing it self, the *Letter* of Scripture ought not to be receded from, lest the taking such a Liberty should be an Injury done to sacred Writ, and should lead to greater.

ⁿ Hieronym. Proem. ad Osee. in Ezech. iv. 9.

^o Schafmannus, Junius, Polanus, Drufius, Hakspanius, Pareus, Zanchius, Rivetus, Calvin, Smith.

^p Witfius, *Miscellan.* Vol. 1. p. 9.

Stillingfleet’s Letter to a Deist, p. 129, 130.

Jenkins, Vol. 2. p. 52.

The other Side thinks, that while there is no plain Force committed upon Scripture, (especially considering that the *prophetick* Style is not subject to common Rules) it may be allowable to take such an Interpretation as is least clogg'd with Difficulties from the Nature and Reason of the Thing. I may shut up this Article with the calm and moderate Words of the learned *Pococke*:

“ Seeing each is back'd by great Authority,
 “ and the Maintainers thereof will not yield to
 “ one another's Reasons, but keep to their own
 “ Way, and accuse those that go otherwise, ei-
 “ ther of Boldness, or Blindness, and some very
 “ learned Men have not dared positively to de-
 “ termine in the Matter; it must be still left to
 “ the considerate Reader to use his own Judg-
 “ ment; only, with this Caution, that he con-
 “ ceive nothing unworthy of God, or unbe-
 “ seeming his holy Prophet, nor draw from the
 “ Words any unfavoury or unhandsome Con-
 “ clusions.”

MICAH vi. 7.

Shall I give my Firstborn for my Transgression, the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul? Here, because the sacrificing of

^a Pococke in Hosea, p. 6.

Children is mention'd among several other better Things, whereby foolish Men hoped to expiate their Guilt, without leading a good Life; our Objector from thence infers, that *human Sacrifices* were requir'd, or approv'd by the *Jewish Law*. His Words are: *The Prophet Micah reckons the putting every devoted Thing to death among the Jewish Institutions. Here the sacrificing a Man's own Children is mention'd equally with the sacrificing of Beasts; which is allow'd to be a Jewish Institution. How absurdly must the Prophet be supposed to have argued, after he hath preferred Justice and Mercy to a Thing commanded by God, if he should go on to prefer it to a Thing abhorred by God?* The Prophet understood good Reasoning much better than his Corrector understands the Prophet: For he entirely mistakes the Case. The Prophet's Business and Design was to enumerate those vain Expedients (of whatever Kind they were) which Men were apt to rely upon, in lieu of a good Life: And because the sacrificing of their own Children was one of the foolish Expedients made use of for appeasing the Deity, he rejects that also, by Name, among the rest, as vain and unprofitable. The Prophet, very probably, had an eye to what King *Abaz* (in whose Reign, and

² Christianity as old, &c. p. 95.

after, he prophesied^s) had committed in that Kind. *Abaz* was one that had learned of the *Moabites*, or other Idolaters, to sacrifice his own Children^t. He made his Son to pass thro' the Fire^v: Or as the *Hebrew* may more properly be rendred^w; He offer'd up (sacrificed) his Son in the Fire, namely, to *Baal*, or to *Moloch*. In another Place, it is said, plainly and directly, that He burnt his Children in the Fire^x. Now because that inhuman Practice was one of the foolish, as well as wicked Devices whereby some considerable Men hop'd to appease Heaven, and to atone for Sins, it was very proper for the Prophet to take Notice of it among the other *insufficient* Expedients thought of for that Purpose. For, though it might differ in its Nature and Quality from several others named, as *legal* differs from *illegal*, or as *commanded* from *forbidden*; yet since here the Point to be considered was not the *Nature* of the Things, but their *Use* or *Subserviency* to the *End* aim'd at, they are indifferently named together, as being equally *vain* and *fruitless*, one as well as the other, though not one as much as the other. In short, as this Means was trust-

^s Micah i. 1.

^t See 2 Kings iii. 27.

^v Ibid. xvi. 3.

^w Vid. Vitringa Observ. Sacr. l. 2. c. 1. Cleric. in Deut. xviii.

21.

^x 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

ed to as well as the other more proper Expedients, so it was right to reject it also among the rest, as of no Value or Efficacy for the appeasing God, or procuring Pardon of Sins.

- If our Objector cannot yet rightly apprehend the Case, I shall endeavour to clear it up farther by a resembling Instance. Suppose we should tell the *Romanists*, that it is vain for them to think of appeasing God either by an *orthodox Faith*, or by *bearing and praying*, or by a *Zeal for the Church of Christ*, or even by *massacring of Protestants* (whom they call *Hereticks*) for that none of these Things will stand them in any Stead; a sound Belief and an entire Obedience to God's Laws must save them, or nothing can: Where would be the Absurdity of such a Remonstrance? It is true, that their *massacring of Protestants* is so far from being at all acceptable to God, that it is the very reverse: But yet because they fondly conceive that they merit by it, therefore in an Application to Them, it might be proper to mention that also, among other much better Things, which they presumptuously confide in: And our so mentioning it, would be no Argument at all of our approving, or of our not abhorring so detestable a Practice. In like Manner, when the Prophet *Micah* took Notice of *human Sacrifices* as one of the false

ZECHARIAH iii. 1, 2. 121

Strays which some rested upon, (among several others of a better Kind) he did not intend to signify that such Sacrifices were *approved*, or were so much as *lawful*, or that they were not *hateful* and execrable in the Sight of God and Man. The Sum of what the Prophet aimed at, was this, and this only: That neither such Sacrifices as the Law allow'd, nor any humanly devis'd Services which the Law had forbidden, would avail to procure the divine Mercy and Favour: For a good and holy Life, or universal Righteousness, was the one Thing necessary which God expected, and would insist upon; and without which, every Thing else that could be named, or invented, would be altogether fruitless and vain.

Z E C H. iii. 1, 2.

And he shewed me Joshua the High-Priest, standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his Right Hand to resist him: And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee. Is not this a Brand pluckt out of the fire? The Objector takes some Notice of this Text, in passing

122 ZECHARIAH iii. 1, 2.

and very slightly. Having immediately before thrown a scornful Reflection upon a Passage in the Book of *Job*, which has been consider'd above, and observing that it is not to be taken *literally*, he adds: *The same may be said of the Lord's saying at another Time to Satan, standing at the Right Hand of the Angel* (at the Right Hand of the High-Priest *Joshua*, he should have said) *to resist the High-Priest Joshua standing likewise before him, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.* As to what this Gentleman objects about *literally*, (a Word of ambiguous Meaning, and in which he loves to equivocate) we may observe, that the Words of this Prophecy are undoubtedly to be interpreted *literally*, not *mystically*, or *allegorically*: But the Thing was not literally or outwardly performed, being transacted in *Idea* only, or in *Vision*. That is to say, the Prophet *Zechariah*, in an heavenly Extasy, or Vision, saw what is here related, had such Ideas imprinted, by a divine Influx, upon his Mind. As to the whole Meaning of this Scripture, I may refer the Reader to Commentators for it, there being no Difficulty that I am sensible of in it. At least, this Gentleman has mention'd none, except it be such as I have before answer'd in considering the other Texts in *Job*, or have now obviated by saying that the Thing was
transacted

ZECHARIAH iii. 1, 2. 123

translated in *Vision*, as is commonly allow'd. There might be some pertinent Questions ask'd in relation to this Passage, by an able Disputant, that should know how to object like a Scholar, and a Man of Parts: But since this Gentleman has spared us, by his entring no deeper, it would look over-officious to engage any farther in it.

I have now done with the Texts of the *Old Testament*. There remain still some Texts of the *New Testament*, which the Objector has been tampering with, in the same Way of low Criticism, and which (if God grants me Life and Health) will be all distinctly considered in a *Fourth Part*, to follow this in due Time.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAGE 9. Line 25. for 1. *Ephemerid.* read 2. *Ephemerid.*
Page 35. Line 15. for *Text*, read *Fact*.

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